The Italians of To-Day

By Richard Bagot

Author of "My Italian Year"

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By RICHARD BAGOT

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THE ITALIANS OF TO-DAY

BY
RICHARD BAGOT
AUTHOR OF
"MY ITALIAN YEAR," "A ROMAN MYSTERY,"
"CASTING OF NETS," "DONNA DIANA,"
ETC.

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THE ITALIANS OF TO-DAY

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

THE cordial reception given by the Press and the reading public generally to *My Italian Year* leads me to believe that some further description of Italian life may not, perhaps, be unwelcome even to the perusers of that volume, and also, possibly, to that larger British public which is not always in a position to provide itself with books of the kind. It is, indeed, to this larger public that I dedicate the following pages, and this not for the sake of popularity hunting, but from an earnest desire to add to my many efforts to contribute to a better and more intimate understanding of modern Italy and her people than at present obtains among the mass of my compatriots. Of English books dealing with Italy, her art, her history, her monuments, and her glorious past, there are very

many; but of books dealing with her present, and with the home life, characteristics, and aspirations of the modern Italians there are extremely few. We English have made the mistake of confusing our traditional love for Italy with an almost total indifference towards, or misconception of, Italians. The result has been, and I do not shrink from affirming it, that the so-called English friendship for Italy has not been received with that cordiality by the Italians which would have been the case had its professors not clearly indicated that it consisted rather in an æsthetic and sentimental admiration for an Italy of the past than in any appreciation of, or sympathy with, the energetic, virile, and courageous people which has made, and is still making, the Italy of to-day.

I wish to make myself clearly understood at the very commencement of this little volume, so that intending readers may cast it aside forthwith if they do not find themselves in agreement with my object in writing it. The following pages are not for the æsthetic and artistic to whom the name Italy stands for all that is most beautiful; neither are they for the historian, nor even, primarily, for the traveller through the

Italian kingdom. They are merely offered to the attention of the man in the street who, although he very often has a considerable knowledge of the Italy of past ages gathered from the works to which I have alluded, has very little acquaintance with, and, I fear, very many misconceptions of, the character and the nature of the modern Italians.

It may be asked why I, an Englishman, should care what impressions the majority of my compatriots may or may not hold concerning a foreign people. I can only reply that I have lived among and with that people for very many years; and that when I hear them misjudged, or read things about them which I know to be false, I feel precisely the same indignation as that which is aroused in me by similar superficial judgments passed on English people by those who neither know nor understand them.

Now, it is very natural that the great mass of the British public should hold very mistaken ideas concerning Italians. I think I am not unduly exaggerating when I say that to this great mass the name Italian conveys little else than barrel-organs, ice-cream venders, cheap restaurants, waiters, and the like—all useful objects in their way, but not

necessarily representative of a great nation. The Italian quarters in our large cities are not, unfortunately, possessed of the best of names for orderliness, nor their inhabitants renowned for quiet and peaceful living. But it is, I would suggest, scarcely fair to the Italians as a whole to judge them entirely by those specimens of their race which, for some reason or another, have elected to dwell out of their own country. A considerable proportion of this class of Italians is made up of those who have been failures at home. A considerable proportion, too, is recruited from the parts of Italy where illiteracy is still largely prevalent—and to this fact, indeed, may often be traced the cause of their emigration, since so great has been the spread of education among the lower classes of late years in Italy, and so high is the standard of that education as compared with our own, that, even in order to earn a livelihood in the humblest callings, the modern Italian who is not up to this standard is yearly finding himself more and more left out in the cold.

Unfortunately, it is too much to expect that what are usually termed the masses belonging to different nations should arrive

at any really fair understanding of each other's true character and temperament. We English do not, as a rule, see the genuine specimens of the Italian race. Even those of us who can afford the time and the money to travel in Italy are seldom brought into contact with any other class of individual than that most undesirable one that hangs about hotels and administers to the wants or the pleasures of tourists. And a considerable proportion of this class, be it noted, is composed not of Italians, but of Germans and Swiss. I have often been amused at hearing English visitors to Italy airing their few and painfully acquired words of Italian to individuals possessed of not a single drop of Italian blood in their veins. At home, as I have said, the word Italian immediately suggests barrel-organs and ice-creams to one very large section of the British public, and, to another, opera, macaroni, pictures, and pretty things generally. I fear, too, that so far as the first section is concerned, street rows, knives, and police courts are at once suggested when anyone mentions Italians.

Now, to anyone who, like the present writer, passes the greater part of his life

among the Italians in their own country, this criterion appears not only entirely superficial, but also entirely erroneous. I do not in the least mean to imply that the Italians are a kind of ideal population; and I am very far indeed from agreeing with those English writers who are apt to depict purely imaginary human beings under the mistaken impression that they are describing the Italians of the present day. We all of us know that marvellous individual in English fiction and books of travel, the Italian peasant, who seems to combine in him or herself all the graces and all the virtues possible to humanity. We also know the Italian ladies and gentlemen of fiction, who, in nine cases out of ten, are in reality persons who act, speak, and think entirely after Anglo-Saxon fashion, and about whom there is nothing Italian except the names and titles by which they are labelled. We know, too, the Italian villain who carries a stiletto in every pocket, and a deadly poison or two to boot. I infinitely regret that justice to my subject compels me to declare these beings to be chiefly fictitious. I do not mean to say that there are no villains in Italy—villains of both sexes—

who are capable of using both the knife and poison in order to attain their nefarious ends—for there undoubtedly exist such; as, indeed, they exist in England and every other country. Fortunately, however, one is not very likely to come across them, unless one deliberately chooses to seek for one's adventures among what is called in Italy the Mala Vita—the Evil Life. As to the Italian peasant, well, I must warn my readers not to expect to find him in real life as he is so often depicted in English print. They will, it is true, encounter very many of the peasant class who on the surface of things almost approach the ideal standard laid down by foreign, and especially by English and American writers. The Italian peasant is a marvellously shrewd individual. He, or she, knows by instinct what is the pleasant thing to say to an accoster; and, as a rule, he is able at once to assume that refinement of manner in which those even of the humblest class of Italians are seldom lacking, and which we are apt to look for in vain among our own lower orders. It is as well, however, not to trust to the outward appearance of things—though I quite admit that when courtesy and good manners are

coupled, as they often are, with good looks, it is hard to believe that immediately below the surface there lurk characteristics which are anything but ideal or attractive. But here, again, be it understood, I am only speaking generally. I have known Italian peasants who might very well have been the originals of some of, we will say, Ouida's heroes. I regret to have to add, however, that in almost every case a very little acquaintance with these charming types of Italian peasantry revealed the fact that they were not really peasants at all, although they were following peasant occupations and leading a peasant's life. In most instances they turned out to be young men who had been originally destined to enter civil professions, but whose families having experienced financial misfortunes were no longer in a position to pay for their education; and who, for private reasons, preferred working on their family acres to emigration to the Argentina or the Brazils. As a matter of fact, there is no shrewder, harder-headed or more unscrupulous being than the average Italian peasant; nor does any class exist in the whole of Italy among which there is so much of the spirit of what

I can only describe as freemasonry. Very few Italians, and certainly no foreigners, possess any real and intimate knowledge of peasant psychology. But to this subject I shall have to return later on in these pages. The Italian peasantry is in many ways a splendid class—the men with the brains and the big boots, as they have been described by an Italian writer; and if it is rare to find among this class individuals who can be said to correspond to their imaginary prototypes in English literature, this does not prevent it from being in reality perhaps one of the most important of the various classes composing the Italian nation, for it holds much of the future of Italy in its hands.

Since the publication of *My Italian Year*, the attention of the world in general has been largely concentrated upon Italy, owing to the outbreak of the Italo-Turkish War. This, indeed, is one of the reasons which has prompted me to offer this present volume to the public. In *My Italian Year* no allusion was made to the probability of hostilities occurring between Italy and Turkey at an early date owing to the intolerable position forced upon Italians in Tripoli and in the Red Sea by the inimical attitude of the

Turkish Government. Those who had followed the course of events connected with Italian commerce with Tripoli and the Turkish ports in the Red Sea were well aware that, unless the Turkish Government modified its attitude of persistently ignoring Italian claims to justice and fair play, some energetic action on the part of the Italian Government was inevitable in the near future. Political questions, however, were purposely excluded so far as possible from my former volume dealing with modern Italian life—and this for very obvious reasons.

Now, on the contrary, there is no reason why I should keep silence regarding such questions; at all events so far as Italian policy in having declared war upon Turkey is concerned. There is, indeed, every reason why I should endeavour to place before the British public certain facts regarding that policy, and certain details connected with the war in which Italy is at present engaged, of which, I think, the vast majority of English people are entirely ignorant—and of which, I may add, they have purposely been kept in ignorance by those who should have enlightened them. I propose, therefore, to

devote a chapter of this little volume to dealing with the monstrous calumnies which have been circulated among the British public by certain organs of the Press, and by certain private individuals, not only against the political honour of Italy, but also against the honour and humanity of her soldiers. In that chapter I shall not offer my own personal ideas or judgment to my readers. I shall rely upon official documents placed at my disposal by the Italian Government, and it is from these documents, and from information derived from private sources, that my statements will be taken. It may be objected that documents emanating from official sources are likely to be prejudiced, if not altogether one-sided in their arguments. To any of my critics who may raise this objection, I will reply that, under any circumstances, these documents are at least as worthy of fair consideration as the statements emanating from Turkish sources and from avowed enemies of Italy. We have seen how every Italian victory in Tripoli has been turned by the Turkish Press and its paid agents into an Italian defeat—and those of us who happen to have had the opportunity of reading the official

declarations of the Italian Government published in the Italian newspapers have seen how every single charge brought by Turkish agents against the Italian troops of inhumanity have been conclusively proved to be utterly false. Unfortunately, these declarations have been either entirely withheld from the English public by the very journals who have been most assiduous in circulating the anti-Italian calumnies originally invented by the paid agents of the "Young Turk" party with the object of alienating English sympathy from Italy, and of prolonging the war in order to advance the interests of a group of financial speculators, or they have been dismissed with a sneer as being unworthy of credence. I confess that I, who possess a very intimate acquaintance with the Italian soldier, and, in some cases, a personal acquaintance with the authors of the documents from which I shall quote, prefer to believe the statements of those whom I know to be honourable and high-minded individuals rather than the charges of those whom I have every reason to believe to be influenced by unjust and unworthy motives.

I shall not waste my reader's time by

dwelling upon the long and hereditary friendship which for centuries has existed between England and Italy. I must, however, record my belief—and it is a belief which is fully shared by our Italian friends—that we English, in our enthusiasm for an Italy of the past—the Italy of the Fine Arts and Sciences, of famous historic traditions, of magnificent palaces, churches, and monuments, of curious and picturesque popular customs—have altogether forgotten to study the Italy of the present day, and also the Italians of the present day. The result has been that, as a nation, we are in reality profoundly ignorant both of modern Italian life, and of the character, temperament, aims, and aspirations of the modern Italians. I can testify to the fact that this ignorance has had a very deplorable effect on Anglo-Italian relations. The Italians of to-day have no need of patronage, English or otherwise; and they have no use for a friendship which they regard as purely æsthetic and sentimental. They fully appreciate the knowledge which learned and artistic English men and women display of their national past, but they equally resent, and bitterly resent, the complete misconception of their national

life and character revealed by their so-called English friends who insist upon shutting their eyes, not only to the marvellous progress made by Italy in the course of a period of fifty years during which she has been a united nation, but also to the courage, determination, and acute intelligence of the modern Italian race which has compassed this progress in the face of the greatest difficulties both internal and external. There can be no doubt, I think, that the recent campaign of calumny and misrepresentation of Italy which has disgraced the pages of several English journals has been a campaign deliberately undertaken by the enemies of both countries with a view to destroying Anglo-Italian friendship, and to bringing about a state of affairs that would deprive England of Italian sympathy and support in the Mediterranean in the event of a European war breaking out in which England should be engaged. I am not suggesting that the journals which have calumniated Italian honour knew their statements to be calumnies. I have far too high an opinion of the honour of the English Press to make any such suggestion. I regard those newspapers, and some, but not

all, of their correspondents, as having been merely the victims of a very cleverly designed system of international mischief-making for purely financial and political purposes—such a system as was put into operation at the time of the Boer War, when similar charges of unwarrantable aggression were brought against England, and similar charges of the grossest and most abominable inhumanity were brought against British soldiers. Now, I would remind my readers that during the two years of our war in South Africa every nation in Europe, with one exception, joined in the monstrous attacks made upon British honour and British humanity. That one exception was Italy. When the Press of all the world was against us, the Italian Press alone upheld the justice of our cause and the honour of our troops, while not a few Italians volunteered to fight under our flag. What has been our response to our traditional friends when they, too, found themselves compelled to declare war upon a country which for three years had committed one outrage after another upon their flag, their colonists, and their commerce, and which had insolently ignored all their attempts to obtain redress

by peaceful and friendly representations? The answer, I fear, does not redound to our credit either for gratitude or for friendship. The only excuse which is to be found for our readiness to join in the machinations of an international syndicate against the nation for which we are always loudly professing friendship lies in the fact that, as a people, we have allowed ourselves to become completely ignorant of Italians as they exist to-day. It is upon this ignorance which unscrupulous newspaper correspondents and dishonest agents employed by the Young Turk party which at present dominates the political situation in Turkey based their operations. If individuals of a similar character had succeeded in getting their calumnies against English honour published in certain English journals at the time of the Boer War, and in arousing a certain outbreak of British hysteria and sentimentalism in favour of the Boers, how much more easy must it have been for their imitators to pursue the same game in the present instance? I will not insist upon these points. My object in this little volume is, as I have said, to present to my readers some slight picture not only of the Italy of to-day, but also of

the Italians of to-day; and if I can succeed in removing certain misconceptions, and also in refuting certain untrue charges which have been made against a generous and chivalrous people which has been proud of British friendship in the past, and which, at a moment when England sorely needed friendship, gave it unstintingly, that object will have been more than fulfilled.

CHAPTER II

THE FIRST UNIFICATION OF ITALY

To describe the events which led to the transformation of the numerous Italian States into a United Monarchy under the sovereignty of the House of Savoy would be too lengthy a matter upon which to embark in these pages. It is a chapter, moreover, of the political history of Europe with which most of my readers are doubtless well acquainted. In order, however, properly to understand and appreciate the Italians of to-day, it is necessary to glance at the conditions of Italy immediately prior to her unification, and also at the circumstances in which the Italians found themselves when that political unification was completed.

The makers of modern Italy found themselves confronted by a situation the difficulties of which might well have appeared almost unsurmountable. The whole of the north of the Italian peninsula, with the exception of Piedmont, was under Austrian domination; while, in Central Italy, Aus-

trian Grand Dukes ruled over Tuscany. The great provinces of Umbria, the Marches, and Rome were under the civil as well as the spiritual sovereignty of the Popes; while the whole of the south, including Sicily, formed the territories of the kingdom of Naples, over which a branch of the Bourbon family held sway. The Italians, therefore, who dreamed of a united nation found themselves confronted at all points by foreigners, who had taken possession of their country; and even the Papal States, and Rome, the ancient capital of Italy, was held by a Power which, although Italian, was nevertheless a bitter enemy to all ideas of nationalization or progress.

The hopes that had long filled the breasts of Italian patriots of a day when foreign domination in Italy should cease, and the various Italian States be united under one Government, first took concrete form among the Piedmontese politicians and the princes of the House of Savoy, who were at the same time kings of Sardinia. If my readers wish to follow the long series of struggles, diplomatic, political, and military, which the Italians had to wage before their dream of unity and liberation from foreign and priestly

tyranny was realized, I must refer them to their history books, since these are not matters which enter into the scope of this volume. It must be sufficient to say that from these struggles Italy emerged a new and, for the first time in her history, a united nation; and her richest and most fertile provinces and States, which since the days of Napoleon had been under the rule of foreigners, one after the other gave their adherence to the new order of things. The last of the independent States to be included in the United Kingdom of Italy were the States of the Church. The capital had in the meantime been moved from Turin to Florence. But it soon became evident that the presence in the very heart of Italy of a large territory ruled over by the hostile power of the Church in the person of the Pope must infallibly prove a constant source of danger. Notwithstanding the fact that a very large proportion of Italians would have preferred at that time to leave Rome in the undisputed possession of the Popes, the bitter animosity of the Vatican to the newly constituted Italian monarchy, and the general feeling among all the populations of the various States that Rome, and Rome only,

should be the capital of the kingdom, left no other course open to the Italian Government but to occupy the city of the Cæsars and the Popes and constitute it the Italian capital. Up to this moment Rome had been garrisoned by French troops, furnished to the Pope by the Emperor Napoleon III in order to protect his temporal sovereignty. The outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War in 1870, and the subsequent downfall of the French Empire, enabled the Italian Government to accomplish the desire of the nation without embroiling itself with France. The Romans themselves, by an overwhelming majority of votes taken in a "referendum" to the people, testified to their desire to be freed from the rule of ecclesiastics. Now, as a very great many unfounded statements, and, I may add, a very great deal of nonsense, have been, and are frequently uttered by the supporters of the temporal sovereignty of the Popes—and as it is chiefly among British converts to Catholicism that these supporters are now to be found—I think this may be an opportune moment in which to dwell for a space upon the subject; since it was one of the most difficult of the many difficult situations by which the modern Italians found them-

selves confronted after having accomplished the political unity of their country.

The annexation by the Italian State of the States of the Church, and more especially the conversion of Rome into the civil capital, is repeatedly condemned by fanatical Catholics as an unjustifiable act of spoliation and as a gross sacrilege. The student of history, and especially the student of the history of the Papacy, will smile at such a condemnation. He will be well aware that the claims made by the Popes to a temporal sovereignty either over Rome or the Roman State have long been proved to rest upon nothing more substantial than a series of forged documents. The so-called gift of Constantine the Great, by which that Roman Emperor was supposed to have handed over to the Popes the attributes of his civil sovereignty, had no existence save in the acute brains of ambitious ecclesiastics who, by trading on the superstitions and the ignorance of Western Europe in the Dark Ages, succeeded in their aim of establishing the Roman Pontiff in the place vacated by the Roman Cæsars. It may, no doubt, be objected that, forgeries or no forgeries, the Popes had for many centuries prior to Italian unity enjoyed complete

sovereignty, temporal as well as spiritual, over Rome and the Roman States; and that the civilized world had recognized and confirmed that sovereignty—and this would be a perfectly fair and logical objection.

It must not, however, be forgotten that this sovereign power which was able to exert not only a temporal influence over its own subjects, but a spiritual influence over the whole world, had proved itself to be the most implacable foe to Italian aspirations towards independence and liberty. The Popes as temporal monarchs might at any moment persuade the rulers of Catholic nations to make war on the newly constituted kingdom; and history had afforded innumerable proofs of how well the Vatican knew how to further its political designs by appealing to the religious sentiment of its foreign adherents. The Italians, moreover, had only won their heritage at the price of defeating and ousting from their midst a great military nation which was at the same time a great Catholic Power. It has been said, and it is a statement which we may even still read in English Catholic journals and in books written by English Catholic authors, that the Italians simply despoiled the Pope of his civil do-

minions and confiscated the property belonging to monastic and conventual establishments, without redress and without indemnity, and that the Italian Government proceeded to persecute the Church it had robbed. These charges are utterly false. The Italian Government, on taking over the civil jurisdiction of Rome and the States of the Church, at once framed a law known as the Law of Guarantees. By this law the Pope and his successors were guaranteed full sovereign privileges. The person of the Roman Pontiff was declared to be sacred and inviolable, and whenever he should choose to appear in public the same honours were to be accorded to him as would be accorded to any reigning sovereign. He was to be free to receive and appoint ambassadors and other diplomatic representatives from and to any foreign State. His correspondence, postal and telegraphic, was to be free of all charges; and all goods entering Italy for his use were exempted from duty. A large sum of money was to be yearly paid to the Vatican as indemnity for the civil revenues of his expropriated territories; while the palace of the Vatican and other Papal palaces were exterritorialized, or constituted domains ab-

solutely under Papal control and independent of the Italian Government and State. As a protest against the Italian occupation of Rome and the Papal States, the Vatican refused to recognize or accept this Law of Guarantees, and still declines to do so. Nevertheless, every clause of this law is scrupulously adhered to by the King of Italy's Government. It is frequently stated that were the Pope really to call upon the Royal Government to pay the arrears of the indemnity due to him under this law, the Italian Exchequer would be unable to meet the demand—and that this is one of the many proofs of the bad faith of the Italians in proposing conditions they had no intention of fulfilling. This statement, also, is false. The clause regarding the indemnity to be paid to the Popes by the Italian Government expressly declares that any arrears in the payment of this indemnity which may not have been claimed by the Vatican during the lifetime of the reigning Pope shall, at his death, revert to the Italian State. At no time, were the Vatican to demand payment of the indemnity, would the Italian Government have any hesitation or difficulty in meeting such a demand. There exist, un-

doubtedly, not only political but also financial reasons which make it inadvisable for the Vatican to receive any indemnity from the Italian Government. Were such an indemnity to be accepted, an immense reduction in the voluntary gifts of money received by the Popes from foreign countries would inevitably take place. The Vatican, moreover, could not accept one clause in the Law of Guarantees without accepting the whole. As to the suppression by the Italian Government of a large number of monastic establishments, this too was a necessity. The country was overrun with monks and nuns of every description; and many of these establishments were, as they still are, mere commercial and political organizations carried on under a religious mask. Pensions were given by the Government to the members of the various religious houses which were suppressed. As a matter of fact, the law regarding conventual establishments has long been allowed by the Italian authorities to become a dead letter—so opposed are they to any action which could be construed into one of intolerance or persecution. In connection with this point, it is a curious fact that at the present moment in Rome the various re-

ligious orders are permitted to hold some of the most valuable property in the city; while in some cases shops, and even large hotels are financed by them. Under the Papal Government, on the contrary, very severe restrictions were placed upon the religious congregations acquiring land or property within the city. The Vatican was far too shrewd to tolerate abuses which are purposely ignored by its successors in the civil administration of Rome. I have dwelt at some length on the attitude of the Italian Government towards the Vatican, because that attitude is persistently misrepresented by English Catholic writers and journals. Lest, however, it should be supposed that I am writing from an anti-Catholic standpoint, it will be my pleasant duty in the course of this volume to explain that the attitude of the priests towards the Italian State, which originally formed so serious an obstacle to the realization of Italian liberty and progress, is now almost a thing of the past, and that the two powers—that of the State and the Church—now work far more harmoniously together than is generally supposed by foreigners to be the case.

When Italian political unity had been

finally completed, and foreign rule for ever suppressed, the real difficulties of the makers of Italy began. The situation was tersely summed up in an immortal phrase of Massimo d'Azeglio, himself one of the most prominent among those who had given independence to Italy. "*Ora che è fatta l'Italia,*" he observed, "*bisogna fare gli Italiani!*" ("Now that Italy has been made, it remains to make Italians!") Such an observation, coming at a moment when the Italian nation had realized its most cherished dream, would seem not only cynical, but illogical. It was, on the contrary, an observation of the most profound foresight and wisdom. The unity which had been accomplished was a political unity only. Social unity was still far from having been obtained. It had, indeed, not even been nitiated. Education had been until that time almost exclusively in the hands of the priests; and the priests had always viewed with suspicion and fear any attempt to disseminate it among the lower classes. The consequence was that illiteracy was practically universal; and with illiteracy there existed the most profound ignorance of all those laws and observances which most tend

to human happiness and health. Italy, as a matter of fact, was merely a geographical expression. In countless districts the Italian language was neither spoken nor understood by the lower orders. Every province, nay, almost every village and town, had its own dialect; while the natives even of towns within sight of one another regarded each other as foreigners. In a very minor degree, remnants of this state of affairs still linger; and it will in all probability be another half-century or more before it ceases altogether to exist. This is one of the reasons why it is so extremely difficult for any foreigner to obtain a clear and unprejudiced insight into Italian life and Italian customs. Even Italians themselves confess to being comparatively ignorant of the psychology, so to speak, of their own countrymen who may happen to belong to parts of Italy remote from their own. It is not, therefore, to be wondered at if they resent the hasty and often entirely unjust criticisms passed by foreigners upon their race, and that they should smile scornfully at the incredible self-assurance of those who profess to know Italians better than Italians know themselves! And this, I venture to observe, is

the fatal error into which nearly all English critics of the modern Italians fall, both in their writings and in their general attitude. They do not realize that when they write, or speak, of Italians, they are referring not to one people only, but to many peoples, differing from each other in character, temperament, habits, and customs, and also, strange as it may seem, in language.

Perhaps I shall better explain my meaning. and at the same time economize the very limited space at my command in this volume, if I confine myself to offering to my readers one example of the almost unsurmountable difficulty by which the makers of modern Italy were confronted in their attempts to confer social as well as political union on their country; and I will only add that this example, I think, should prove to them the correctness of my statement that extremely few foreigners can have any competency to make sweeping criticisms on the Italian race, whether these criticisms be favourable or unfavourable in their tenor.

It would be strange, indeed, were a Londoner to visit, we will say, Manchester or Birmingham, and to find himself unable to understand what was being said by the in-

habitants of those cities. And yet this is the position even to-day of countless Italians belonging to one city or region of the Italian Kingdom whom business or pleasure take to some other centre. The Milanese language, as talked at Milan and, in varying forms, throughout Lombardy, is practically unintelligible to those Italians who do not happen to be Lombards. The same may be said of the dialects spoken in all the chief Italian cities and in the different parts of Italy. In certain provinces, and notably in the north of Italy, these dialects frequently vary from town to town, and even from village to village in sight of one another. Italian, of course, is the national language, and it is now understood by all but the very oldest members of the lower classes throughout the country, thanks to the system of education which was one of the first of the many boons conferred upon Italy by the unification of her various States. Even now, however, the native inhabitants of these various States and their capital cities cling to their local dialects when conversing or doing business with each other, and as a rule only talk Italian when in the company of their compatriots from other parts of Italy. This custom, moreover,

is by no means confined to the lower classes. In all the great cities, each of which has an aristocracy of its own, and often a very ancient and illustrious one, the members of this aristocracy prefer to speak their own dialect when amongst each other, and only talk Italian out of courtesy to a stranger. Now difference of language infers, without doubt, difference in many other things, such as habits and customs, temperament, traditions, and also character. It is this difference which makes it a hard and wellnigh impossible task for any foreigner unacquainted with the numerous Italian dialects correctly to estimate the Italians of to-day; and, I may add, it is forgetfulness or ignorance of this difference which has caused so many English writers on Italian subjects to give to their readers an entirely erroneous impression of the Italian people.

The makers of modern Italy, then, found themselves, as Massimo d'Azeglio foresaw would be the case, in the position of having given to the country political union only. Social unity had yet to be accomplished; and this has proved to be a far more difficult task. The first step towards its accomplishment was the obligatory teaching of the pure

Italian language in all the schools throughout the country. The next, perhaps, was the institution of an obligatory military service. It was believed that, among the many other benefits conferred by conscription—and to these benefits, as well as to its disadvantages, I shall have to refer in another chapter—not the least important would be the fusion of the various sections of the Italian people which might be expected to take place under a system which brought young men of all classes and of all regions into close contact with each other during their term of military service. For this reason conscripts from the northern provinces were drafted into regiments quartered in the south of the kingdom, and vice versa. Unfortunately, the results of this plan were far less than had been anticipated. The soldiers, in their hours of liberty, almost invariably sought the companionship of those belonging to their own particular town or district; and this spirit of clanship is even still a prominent feature of Italian barrack life.

But, indeed, were I to attempt to name any but the most important details connected with the conversion of a number of separate and independent Sovereign States into one

united nation, this present volume would assume altogether undesirable proportions. It is, perhaps, only those like myself, who have lived among the Italians and who have carefully watched, and benefited by, the unparalleled courage, perseverance, and ability which they have brought to bear upon the consummation of their great national task, who are able fully to realize either the magnitude of that task, or the immense results which in the short space of little more than forty years—a mere nothing in the history of nation-making—they have succeeded in achieving. Opposed at every turn by foreign suspicion and jealousy; exposed at every moment to the bitter hatred of the Vatican, which saw in the new order of things a perpetual menace to its political and spiritual claims; confronted by the vast problem of the consolidation and readjustment of national finance; compelled by force of circumstances, internal and external, to create a powerful army and navy, to establish a new penal and civil code of laws, to carry education—and, in deed, so far as certain regions were concerned, a more advanced civilization—into the remotest parts of the Italian peninsula and its dependent islands; called upon to establish

a complete system of railways, of postal and telegraphic communication—these details formed only a few out of the many problems and difficulties which the modern Italians had to confront and solve as the natural and immediate result of the unification of their country. I have no fear of being contradicted by any intelligent or impartial observer of Italian progress when I affirm that no other people in Europe could have faced these difficulties more courageously, or overcome them so successfully as the Italians have done in less than half a century.

It is scarcely to be wondered at, therefore, if the Italians of to-day regard their national achievements with legitimate pride. Neither is it to be wondered at if they resent the fact that foreigners, and especially English and Americans, are apt either to ignore these achievements, or to grumble and complain because they do not always find the same level of progress and of public convenience as that to which they are accustomed in their own countries. We English, at all events, are too prone to forget that it has taken us the best part of a thousand years to perfect our Constitution and our national life; and we do not realize the gross in-

justice of expecting from two generations of Italians things which it has taken, roughly speaking, forty generations of Englishmen to effect. Moreover, I am afraid we do not realize that, in Italian eyes at all events, our own national life is still very far from having been brought to perfection, and that in the streets of London and in those of any of our cities, in our public parks and places of recreation, there may daily be seen examples of public behaviour which would not be tolerated in any Italian village, and which both surprise and disgust Italians. To these matters, however, I shall have to recur later on. As a nation, we are extremely fond of criticizing the manners, customs, and morals of other nations. We seldom pause to consider what the people of these nations may think of our own!

CHAPTER III

THE ITALIAN PEASANT

TRUE to my already expressed intention of giving some slight account of every class of the Italian community, I shall begin, so to speak, at the bottom of the ladder. The lowest rung of a ladder, however, is by no means the least important. It constitutes the first step to higher things—and, moreover, it seldom breaks. In attempting to describe the Italian peasant as he exists to-day, I am fully conscious of undertaking a task which, as I have pointed out, is virtually beyond the competence of a foreigner, however long that foreigner may have lived in Italy, or however well acquainted he may believe himself to be with the peasantry. But where Italians themselves have often to confess to being both perplexed and baffled, I offer no excuse for the fact that my descriptions must perforce be far from exhaustive ones.

That portion of the Italian peasantry which has remained faithful to the land—the

members of which have not thought it beneath their dignity to follow in their fathers' footsteps as tillers of the soil—is a class apart and by itself. Its traditions have their roots far back in the centuries. Indeed, in certain districts of Italy there is probably but little difference between the traditions of the Italian peasant of to-day, so far as his methods of cultivation are concerned, and those which influenced his forefathers in the days of Horace and Virgil. I believe, too, that certain traditions which influence his daily life can be traced back to old Roman times, and possibly to times previous to those. In character, however, he is probably, if not certainly, very different from the simple, bucolic swain of the Georgics. Like his class in England, he has his defects and his vices, and these vary considerably according to his native surroundings. I do not know that it is very necessary to dwell at any length upon his vices. These, as a rule, he shares in common with others of higher social positions than his own. In the northern provinces of Italy he is apt to be more truthful than sober; while in the central and southern portions of the country the reverse may be said to be the case. In what are usually re-

ferred to as "morals," his class as a whole sets a good example to those of higher rank in the social scale. He marries young; usually as soon as he has completed his term of military service, and in the general way he is both a good husband and a good father.

In a great many parts of Italy, though by no means in all, the *métayage*, or system by which the produce of the land is divided in equal portions between the proprietor and the peasants who cultivate it, is in vogue. It is a system which has much to be said both for and against it. Perhaps its chief disadvantage lies in the temptation it affords to the peasant to be dishonest; and, as a natural result, the precautions the proprietor is in self-defence obliged to take in order to guard against fraud. These precautions frequently take the form of a species of self-obliteration on the proprietor's part. Rather than expose himself to the petty annoyances, and sometimes to the serious dissensions which at any moment may arise between him and his peasants regarding the quantity or the value of agricultural produce, he farms out the whole of his interests in his property for a fixed yearly sum to a "middle-man," and thus relieves himself of all further re-

sponsibility. It is obvious that this measure almost invariably leads, not only to injustice to the peasants, but also to the detriment of the land. The middle-man naturally wishes to make as large a profit as he can over and above the sum he has contracted to pay to the proprietor. He has but a very small interest in seeing that the land is not over-farmed or over-stocked. He looks at the net results only, well knowing that so soon as the varying term of years for which his contract may have to run is expired, he can decline to renew it, and leave the proprietor to grapple with the situation he has created. In the case of a proprietor who himself looks after his property or who has an able and just *fattore*, or agent, to deal with his peasants, the *métayage* system is undoubtedly fair enough both to landlord and tenant. The worst of it is, however, that Italian landlords, as a rule, considerably underpay their *fattore*. The consequence is that the said agents in very many cases, even when they would perhaps by nature be honest both to their employer and to the peasants, find themselves obliged to supplement their very inadequate salary by cheating both the one and the others. But, as a general rule, it is

not the peasant who suffers. He is extremely shrewd and extremely far-seeing. If he has reason to believe that either his landlord or his landlord's agent is trying to get the best of him, it is a hundred chances to one that he does not in the end succeed in getting the better of both.

A great deal of nonsense is talked and written by foreigners who have not lived in Italian country districts concerning the intense poverty which is supposed to exist among the Italian peasantry. Financial conditions vary, of course, in different regions; and some of the peasantry in the mountainous districts are certainly very badly off. In very many districts, however, and notably in the plains and in such fertile provinces as large parts of Tuscany, Umbria, and in the south, there is considerably more money among the peasant population than is generally supposed to be the case. The immense spread throughout the country of Credit Banks, co-operative institutions, agrarian societies, and other economic undertakings have proved an inestimable boon to the peasants, who are frequently small proprietors on their own account. Indeed, the peasant who is also the owner of the soil he cultivates

is becoming every year less of a rarity, and in certain districts he may be said to be in the majority. The large landed estates in Italy have always tended towards disintegration, since the adoption of the Napoleonic law by which all the children of a landowner had, at their father's death, more or less equal rights over the family property. This, of course, necessitated the perpetual subdivision of land; and in not a few instances with which I am acquainted, estates which were formerly of large extent are now cut up into small holdings which have become the property of peasant proprietors. No doubt this state of affairs will commend itself to my democratic, and still more to my socialist readers; and I am bound to say that, in Italy, it commends itself in a sense also to me. I may say at once, however, that it does so only because, in Italy, the majority of the great landed proprietors have never possessed that sense of duty and of responsibility to their tenants and dependents which has almost invariably characterized their counterparts in England. The Italian landed proprietor, as I have said, has been too apt to regard his property merely as an object from which to wring the last possible penny,

without troubling himself to think about the state—economic, moral, or hygienic—of his tenants, or even of the prudent cultivation of his land. I do not mean to imply that all great Italian proprietors are of this kind. There are brilliant exceptions; but, although they are perhaps less rare than formerly, they remain always exceptions to the general rule. The small peasant proprietor, then, always supposing that his land be fairly fertile and he himself an energetic individual, enjoys undoubted advantages. His daily life costs him little. His sons follow the plough or attend to the live-stock, and his daughters, when they are not occupied with household affairs, also work in the fields. His wife is generally the ruling spirit, and it is a spirit which, while taking good care that everybody connected with the establishment does his or her day's work, by no means neglects to do her own. His little kingdom, therefore, may be said to be self-contained. He has few tradesmen's bills, nor has he any occasion to have them. His land, which may be anything from five to a hundred acres or more, provides him and his family with all the necessaries of life, except, perhaps, clothes. If he eats meat, it is, as a rule, only on Sundays

and holidays; and even then the poultry-yard and, in certain seasons, the pig-stye, provide him with this luxury. His bread is made at home—and very far preferable and also infinitely more wholesome is it than the bread his British brother would buy from the baker. His vineyards supply his wine. I wonder how many of my compatriots who think that because they have drunk Italian wines as supplied by their hotel-keepers at five francs a bottle, and who have with justice pronounced them to be at the best but a superior brand of vinegar doctored with red ink, have any idea of what Italian wines really can be? In Tuscany, for instance, a friendly peasant proprietor will produce for you a wine no whit inferior to a French claret or burgundy for which you pay twelve shillings a bottle in an hotel or restaurant, and which you could not get for love or money in any hotel in Italy frequented by the English or the Americans. That it is in a flask, the mouth of which is closed with a piece of tow, matters nothing—it is genuine. Only the grapes and the sun have entered into its composition. At all the Italian hotels frequented by foreigners an execrable composition is sold which is called "Chianti."

A flask of this abominable decoction, which is generally the refuse wine from the south of Italy plentifully watered, is sold to the unfortunate foreigner at, generally, six francs. The cost of the two odd bottles which the said flask should contain might possibly be forty centimes—it could not be more! This discourse on wine, however, is a digression. It is perfectly true that the peasant proprietor has to face great and serious risks. His crops may fail; his vines may get the disease; his beasts may die. Worse than all, he may see both vines and crops destroyed in the space of a few minutes—scorched and burnt black by a hail-storm which, perhaps, leaves his neighbour's land untouched. In these modern days, however, such disasters are usually covered by insurance; but there are still not a few small proprietors who prefer to take the risks of Nature rather than take out a policy against events which may never come to pass. In the particular district in which I live—a district quite out of the beaten track and many miles from the nearest railway—the peasants are, as a rule, extremely well-to-do. Not a few of them have very respectable sums to their credit at the local banks, and real poverty is non-

existent. Sixty pounds is the average price paid by them for a pair of oxen which are used for ploughing—and they will deal in these oxen, buying and selling them again at a small profit, as horse-dealers might deal with horses.

The Tuscan peasant is in many ways a being who differs greatly from the peasants in other parts of Italy. He differs, also, in the various provinces and districts of Tuscany. Unlike those of Lombardy, Piedmont, and, indeed, of all the Italian States except in the neighbourhood of Rome, the Tuscan peasant as a rule talks a pure Italian. This is especially the case in the country around Siena, and also in what is called the Pistoiese. It is a curious fact that many words which are now in daily use in Tuscany, although no longer employed by educated Italians, belong to the classical Italian of Dante's times. Around Siena, and also in certain other districts, it is a pleasure to listen to the rich, musical language talked by the peasant even when among themselves. And with this graceful, poetic language there is also an extraordinary courtesy and refinement of manner and, very often, ideas, accompanied, too, in countless cases, by remarkable good

looks and fine physique. In nine cases out of ten, however, behind all these prepossessing attributes the peasant nature rarely fails to betray itself on a more intimate acquaintance. Sceptical, suspicious, intensely shrewd and yet at the same time not infrequently of a surprising ingenuousness, supremely egoistic and yet occasionally extraordinarily disinterested and generous, there is something mysterious and undefinable about the Tuscan peasant which is extremely attractive. I have no intention of making a hero of him—or a heroine of her. I leave that to others who perhaps know the type even less than I do. All the same, I believe that, taken the right way, the average Tuscan peasant is about the most pleasing specimen of his order to be found anywhere in the world. It is not always easy, however, to take him the right way—or, rather, to discover that way. If you fail to discover it, however, you need not be uneasy. Unless you have the ill-luck to light upon some disreputable specimen such as are to be found among all classes in all lands, your Tuscan peasant will not openly resent the fact; he will probably be always courteous, always communicative—and it will not be until

some time afterwards that you will find that he has been laughing at you in his sleeve. Perhaps you will never find it out—and if this is the case you will, if you are an author, probably put him in your next book in which he will figure as a kind of demi-god. If you do find him out, however, or if someone enlightens you, you will at first feel considerably annoyed. Afterwards, your annoyance will give place to an amused admiration at the grace and refinement with which—to use a vulgar expression—your leg has been pulled. I think the first step towards winning the confidence of the average Tuscan peasant is to treat him as an equal—and not as a social equal only, but also as an intellectual one. He is by nature both proud and sensitive. Moreover, he has often a very surprising amount of education, not only natural, but also acquired. If anyone would care to investigate this matter for himself, I should advise him to pay a visit on some winter evening to a peasant's house and assist at one of the usual gatherings round the kitchen fire after the day's work is done. He will hear these peasants, fresh from their rough labour in the fields and vineyards, vying with each other in reciting poetry and telling

stories—and sometimes the poems and the stories will flow ceaselessly until well after midnight. Generally both are extemporary, and often of extraordinary poetic grace and imagination. Sometimes, however, some well-known poet is rendered, and it is surprising how each line and each cadence is given its full artistic beauty. Poetry, indeed, seems to be inherent in the character of the Tuscans of the agricultural classes, in the same way as music is in the lower classes in and around Naples. The Tuscan sense of artistic beauty, however, is on a far higher level than that of the Neapolitans; and it is rare, except in the case of some of the impromptu *stornelli* sung very often in a jeering spirit by peasants working in the fields, to hear anything which is the least coarse or indecent. And here, again, the strange inconsistency of the Tuscan peasant comes in—for, except in the province of Lucca, there is none more proficient in the use of foul and blasphemous language than the Tuscan. He originates expressions which would leave an English bargeman speechless with astonishment, and perhaps with envy. The gift of reciting improvised poetry on the spur of the moment is not, however, confined to the

peasants in Tuscany. I know of an instance which occurred in my own neighbourhood not so very long ago, which certainly could not have occurred anywhere but in Tuscany. A local doctor was driving to catch a train at a station a few miles from me, and on his way he was accosted by a colleague who happened to be looking over his garden wall. The colleague shouted out a line of improvised verse to him; upon which he instantly pulled up his horse and capped the verse with another. Doctor number two responded, and for three hours the poetic contest was continued without a moment's cessation; the whole of the village in the meantime having turned out to listen, and to bet upon who would be the first to lack an inspiration. It was only as dusk came on that doctor number one remembered that he was on his was to catch a train! Whether a patient were expecting him I know not, but I feel convinced that such a detail would not have been allowed to interfere with this war of verses. And, be it noted, even among the peasants, the slightest departure from the form in which the original lines are set is at once detected, and the reciter is considered to have lost the match. As a rule, the Tuscan

of all classes is an extremely sober individual. On great festive occasions too much wine may occasionally be drunk, and human spirits may run high accordingly. But it is exceedingly rare to see a drunken man in Tuscany; and the chances are that, if one does, he is not a Tuscan. As to a drunken woman, I do not think that in all the years I have lived in Italy I have ever seen such a spectacle. In the north, however, and also in and about Rome, drunkenness is, unfortunately, far too common. In Lombardy spirit-drinking is the curse of the working classes—and in Rome the strong Roman wines are almost as fatal to the Italian constitution as spirits. In both parts of Italy the direct results of intemperance has been an enormous increase in insanity and tubercular disease. A great evil has been the introduction into Italian towns of that pernicious institution the drinking-bar—an exotic curse imported from across the Alps and from England and America. In Florence and the Tuscan cities these bars are comparatively harmless, since the average Tuscan rarely drinks any form of alcohol except at his meals. In Milan, however, and in Rome, these places have become a serious

blot upon Italian progress—leading not only to disease, but also to crimes of all kinds.

It is, I think, the fashion in England to regard the Italians as a lazy race content to bask in the sun and to work as little as possible. Like many other British ideas concerning the race, nothing could be further from the fact. I am afraid that were the English peasant or workman to be required to work for the same number of hours in the day as their Italian comrades, we should have even more strikes than is at present the case. The Italian peasant as a rule begins his working day at three in the morning in summer and at five in winter. He works till eight or nine, when he rests for an hour and has his breakfast, which consists of bread and cheese, perhaps a slice or two of *salame*—a kind of sausage—and wine. Then he recommences and works till midday, when he has his dinner, which is either brought to him in the fields if he is far away from his home, or if he is within reasonable distance he goes to his house for it. In winter he usually begins work again at two, or even before, and in summer at three. If it be summer he goes on working until the *Ave Maria* rings, which during the summer

months is not till past eight o'clock in the evening. The hours of the artisan are very much the same, except that in most of the factories and workshops the day begins at seven. Nothing surprises the Italian so much as the lateness of the hour at which shops and other places of business in English towns open in the mornings, unless it be the earliness of the hour at which they close at nights. It has always been a mystery to me why my compatriots should have chosen to regard the Italians as a lazy people. I can only suppose that they have not, when in Italy, kept their eyes open and observed the life of the people around them. I can only suppose, too, that they are not aware that the hardest and most continuous manual labour both in Europe and America is largely and, in certain countries, almost entirely done by Italians. I am sometimes quite distressed at the amount of work my own people get through in a day in Tuscany, and when I compare it with what the average out-door labourer would do in three or four days in England, assisted by much bacon, beef, and beer, I cannot but wonder still more at Italian energy and at Italian endurance. The same may be said of the

working classes throughout Italy. Even the Neapolitans, while they are at work, work like demons. It is true that the Italian workman, peasant or otherwise, has many more holidays in the course of the year than is the case in England. But even these holidays have been of late years greatly reduced in number by consent of the people themselves. The numerous religious holidays, such as saints' days and other ecclesiastical observances, are no longer recognized by law, with the exception of some half-dozen great feasts of the Church, apart from Sundays. The present Pope, among many other wise reforms, has considerably limited the days in the year which until quite recently were regarded by the priests and by the more observant among the faithful as days upon which it was sinful to work. In this, as in countless other things which no doubt escape the notice and even the knowledge of those who do not happen to live with Italians, the difference between the Italy of to-day and that Italy which so many English people fondly believe still exists is as striking as it is unmistakable.

In studying the psychology of the modern Italian peasant, nothing perhaps is so diffi-

cult to arrive at as a clear conception of his attitude towards his religion. A superficial observer would credit him with being extremely superstitious—and this, indeed, is the opinion concerning him of the majority of his foreign critics. Superstitious he certainly is, up to a certain point—but only up to the point where superstition does not clash with his interests. Assuredly not the least striking example of the marvellous power of Latin Catholicism to assimilate and turn to its own advantage elements which might easily undermine its influence is that of its dealing with the complex mental attitude of the Italian peasant classes. Side by side with his superstition, the Italian peasant has also a vein of the most profound scepticism running through his nature. It is not a question of how much, or of how little, he believes. The difficulty is to know whether in his heart of hearts he really believes in anything at all, except, possibly, in a Supreme Being. I have spoken on this subject with many priests whose lives have been spent in ministering to peasant populations, and the conclusion that all those who did not shrink from giving their real opinion as to the actuality of the belief of the modern Italian

peasants in the dogmas and teachings of the Church has invariably been—that they, the priests, were entirely unable to say. I am quite aware that this statement will be violently contradicted by those who point to the enthusiasm of the peasants for their religious processions, their devout attendance at mass, and their determination to uphold certain observances and practices which are regarded by more educated Catholics as justifiable only because it would be neither prudent nor politic to denounce them for what they really are, namely, survivals of those forms of worship which immediately preceded the Christian dispensation, as proofs of the ardour of their faith. The Italian peasant, however, usually has an object in view for most things that he does, as well as for most things that he says. I do not believe—and I know that many of the priests who are best acquainted with him do not believe—in the disinterestedness and genuineness of his religious faith. If we examine carefully those superstitions to which the peasant is, as a rule, most devoted, and which cause him to be regarded as devoted to his Church, we shall find that in every case the observance and upholding of such super-

stitions are acts which contribute very largely to the furtherance of his own purely material and worldly advantages. They also contribute very largely to the purely material and worldly advantages of the Church, and also, no doubt, indirectly to her spiritual influence.

I will endeavour to be brief on this point—though it is an all-important one to arriving at some understanding of the peasant character as represented by the peasants in all but the most southern portions of Italy. It is also an all-important one in so far as it does much to explain how Latin Catholicism, with its marvellous insight into human character, is still able to influence so largely a people which is, on the whole, probably the most sceptical and the least sentimental of any in Europe.

In my own district, as in countless others in Italy, the peasants will sometimes pay several francs for the honour of a prominent place in one of the processions in honour of the Madonna; and if they cannot pay in money they will pay in kind, sending to the priest chickens, grain, or wine.

Now, the amazing part of the whole business is that the very peasant who is vic-

timized in this way does not scruple to express the most profound scepticism of, and even contempt for, miraculous Madonnas, and all the rest of the priestly myths. Occasionally, but very rarely, in talking to peasants, whom for precaution's sake I have allowed to believe that I myself was a confirmed believer in such things, I have met with a simple faith that was evidently genuine—and I need not say that I have most carefully abstained from saying a word that could disturb this faith. For the most part, both among peasants and among artisans, I have only met with the most cynical scepticism, and this sometimes also among priests themselves.

For a long time, indeed for many years, I found it very hard to reconcile these two phases of the Italian attitude towards certain religious matters. It certainly is not an easy matter to explain why a peasant, for instance, should trouble himself to make a considerable sacrifice in money or in moneys' worth unless he were really convinced that he would receive in return some spiritual advantage. It was not until I had become better acquainted with the material side of the problem that things began, so to speak, to straighten

themselves out. Now, we will put aside the spiritual advantages, real or imaginary, which may accrue to the peasant from his eagerness to support religious observances in which he has not the slightest faith, and we will glance only at the material and tangible benefits it will bring him. To begin with, it must be remembered that the peasant is part of a community which for countless generations has centred round the parish church. He is perfectly well aware of the advantages which must accrue to him by supporting his local sanctuary, and especially by supporting the particular attractions which that sanctuary may possess. In the first place, it is largely to his interest to keep in with the parish priest, who is very often a peasant like himself. As likely as not he will give vent to language of a wholly irreligious kind when he is called upon to contribute some of his hardly earned money to the glory of the local Madonna, and he cherishes no sort of illusion as to where that money eventually finds its way. But he would be roused to fury were the local Madonna to be held up to public ignominy as a painted fraud. Such an exposure would be bad for trade. The power which

had attracted the country folk from far and near to the little village or town would have departed, and with it would disappear the frequent pilgrimages during which many an opportunity for doing business had presented itself. As to the parish priest, frequently a peasant himself, he has to swim with the current and act in the general interests of the community. If he is fortunate enough to have in his church a miracle-working picture or statue, he very often does not believe in its powers himself, and if you possess his confidence he will probably hint as much to you. But it is a valuable asset; an attraction belonging to the village which it is to his own and to the common interest to "boom" to the best of his ability. Were he to be honest, and tell his people that their sacred statue or picture had no supernatural powers, but was merely to be reverenced as a symbol of the personage it represented, his honesty would speedily be checked by an intimation that he was damaging the pecuniary interests and the reputation of the *paese*, and that he must either play the game or the place would be made too hot to hold him. I doubt not that, with all his scepticism, and notwithstanding his more material

object in supporting the superstitions of his native place, at the back of the peasant's mind there ever lurks a dim fear lest, after all, things might turn out to be as the priest pretended; and that, in this case, it would be as well to have something to the credit side in the Almighty's ledger. After all, a similar thought lurks at the back of the minds of most of us—and it is this, perhaps, which has constituted the chief power of the priesthood of all ages and of all creeds.

I have said that the Italian peasant as a rule is a good husband and a good father. He is also almost invariably a good son. From all parts of Italy the emigration from the agricultural classes is very large. In some small towns and villages every able-bodied man is away in America, in the Argentina, or in France and Switzerland. At first sight this wholesale emigration would appear to be a serious misfortune to the country—and in a certain measure it is so, since agricultural labourers are yearly becoming more difficult to find, and many parts of Italy are suffering in consequence.

On the other hand, large sums of money are yearly sent home by these emigrants, who rarely either settle or invest their earnings in

the foreign country to which they have gone. Their first thought is to provide for their parents and relatives left at home; and, as a matter of fact, they rarely remain away more than two years at a time. Another characteristic of the Italian peasant is his remarkable spirit of humanity to those of his own class who are ill or incapacitated. I have known cases of illness in which, without saying a word even to the doctor, peasants have arranged with one another to take it in turns to sit up through the nights with the sufferer. Now this may appear a small thing—but in the case of men who work as hard for so many hours of the day as the Italian peasant, the loss of even a portion of the hours of rest is a considerable sacrifice.

It is not, I venture to think, emigration which has damaged the peasant classes in Italy so much as another feature that is every year becoming more prominent throughout the country. The modern Italian peasant is nothing if not ambitious. In former days, and to a certain extent even now, it was the height of a peasant family's ambition that one of its members should become a priest. This, as a rule, was, and still is, the case rather with the less well-to-do

peasants than with those who are in comfortable circumstances. That the lad destined for the priesthood should have any particular vocation to such an office has always been quite a secondary consideration, if, indeed, it enters at all into the calculations of the family. These calculations are simply based upon material interests. Given a fairly intelligent boy, the money expended on educating him to become a priest is regarded as an investment. With any luck, at any rate a modest income of forty pounds a year or so—to which may be added the proceeds of the glebe land belonging to the country parish church, and the numerous perquisites to which I have already alluded—is almost certain to be earned by the young peasant priest by the time he is seven- or eight-and-twenty; while the honour and glory of having a son who says mass and makes the *Santissimo* gives a social lift to his family. In more recent days the number of peasants' sons who become priests is, however, far less than it was. The profession has lost something of its popularity. On the other hand, the ambitions of the peasant family are now centred upon having a son who shall become an employé of the Government, or enter the civil professions as a

lawyer, a doctor, and other similar callings. The sacrifices made by many families in order to send the most promising of their sons to school and college in the neighbouring big town are enormous. Unluckily, it very frequently happens that these sacrifices cannot be continued. A series of bad seasons, illness, and other misfortunes often oblige the parents to remove their boy from college just as he has learned enough to make him thoroughly discontented with his former life and surroundings. The consequence is that the boy finds himself cast adrift upon the world. His former occupations have become distasteful to him, and he feels that his former companions are beneath him in education and experience. And so he joins the ever-swelling ranks of that army of young men in Italy who hope by some means or another to obtain minor posts in the bureaucracy or to become clerks to that other army of lawyers by which modern Italy is, unluckily, oppressed. Could he but know it, he would have been far happier and far better off had he condescended to revert to his natural sphere in life—and, indeed, I have known several young fellows who have had the good sense to revert to it, and very creditable members of their community they are.

I must not, however, allow myself to dwell any longer on the modern Italian peasant in this chapter; for I shall have presently to show how splendidly he has come forward in order to give his services, and his life if necessary, in order to fight his country's battles against a treacherous and uncivilized foe. As I have already explained, the peasant, like the majority of Italians, differs largely in his customs and characters according to the part of Italy of which he is a native. I have been able, therefore, to give only a very superficial sketch of peasant peculiarities; but, in dwelling chiefly on the Tuscan type of the class, I think I shall have succeeded in affording my readers some idea of the best types of peasantry belonging to other Italian provinces and regions. There are, of course, many black sheep among the peasantry, as in all classes —and when the peasant is a black sheep, he is apt to be very black indeed. On the whole, however, the class represents some of the best and most virile blood in Italy, and perhaps in Europe. The man "with the brains and the big boots" has recently shown how competent he is to take his place as one of the most valuable assets of his country.

CHAPTER IV

THE ITALIAN WORKMAN

THE difficulties which stand in the way of giving any really comprehensive description of the psychology of the Italian peasant apply equally, though in a minor degree, to a similar attempt to describe the modern Italian artisan. Like the peasant, upon whom, as a rule, he looks down as belonging to a lower social grade than himself, the workman differs considerably in his character and temperament; and this not only on account of race, but also as a result of the influences predominating among his fellow-workers in the particular cities or districts in which he may be employed. There is, for instance, all the difference in the world between the Milanese artisan and his colleague who is a native of the neighbouring Venetian provinces and whose lot may be cast in those provinces. The Milanese workman is in the majority of cases thoroughly imbued with socialistic ideas, although he may not be actually a socialist. He is, therefore, in a

more or less continuous state of discontent, and strikes, often of a serious and violent nature, are things of comparatively frequent occurrence in Milan and the Lombard cities. The same social defects are to be found among the workmen of the Romagna, and also, it must be added, among the agricultural classes of that turbulent district. Indeed, it may fairly be said that in every part of Italy in which subversive social doctrines are taught by the professional agitators, and where anti-clerical ideas are largely propagated, there will be found discontent, envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness. In these districts, in many cases, the people have been violently set against their natural religion; and there can be no doubt that whereas Anglo-Saxons and Teutons if deprived of all their religious faith may nevertheless remain good citizens and worthy members of their community, those belonging to the Latin races, unless they happen to be highly educated or naturally law-abiding individuals, are apt to become anything but desirable elements of a state. It is one thing to expose, and to attempt to suppress, superstitions and religious abuses and imposture; but it is quite another to

aim, as do the more uneducated Italian socialists and anticlericals, at robbing a nation of its ancient faith in return for which nothing but the grossest forms of materialism are offered to it.

The Milanese workman, compared with those in the Venetian provinces, is well paid, and has in reality but little to complain of. The workman of the Veneto, on the contrary, very rarely is able to earn more than three francs a day, or about two shillings and threepence in our money—on which, in these days of high prices for the most pressing necessities of life, he can barely exist. Nevertheless, the artisan of these last districts in which socialism has made but little way, and anticlericalism practically none at all, is a far happier and more contented individual than his fellows in Lombardy and the Romagna, and he is, moreover, quite as good if not a better workman.

Taken as a class, that of the Italian artisan is a particularly intelligent one; and it is no rare thing to find men who, besides their natural intelligence, are also very well educated. As a rule, they take a considerable interest in politics, and are great readers of their newspapers. Indeed, very

many of the younger operatives are regular attendants at the lectures delivered in the evenings at the various educational establishments which, with wise forethought, have been founded in almost every city of importance throughout the kingdom. I do not mean to say that among them there are not to be found many individuals who have the same vices and defects as those of the less respectable among British workmen; but I believe I am not wrong in supposing that the proportion of Italian artisans who waste their wages upon drink and their time at looking on at games and sports is very small indeed in comparison with that which would be found to be the case in Great Britain. The Italian workman, however, shares to the full that love of gambling which seems to be inherent in the Latin races. But even in the gratification of this passion he generally displays a laudable moderation. In reality, the most popular form of gambling in Italy, apart from that for gambling for a flask of wine, while it may be, and very often is, injurious to the individual, largely benefits the State. Every week, in the principal cities, the winning numbers in the State Lottery—the *Lotto*, as it is called—are drawn. The

numbers which may be selected by the gambler range from 1 to 90; and out of these, five in each of the various great cities form the winning numbers in that particular city. The process is simple, and not a little attractive. One may "play" on two, three, four, or five numbers on any or all of these cities. For instance, the inhabitant of a little village, we will say in Sicily, may "play" on the numbers which he thinks may be drawn at Milan, Turin, or Venice —while the inhabitant of a Lombard village may equally fix his choice on numbers which he believes will come out at Rome, Naples, or Palermo. He may risk the minimum stake of twelve centimes, or the maximum of ten francs; but these stakes, being limited to one ticket only, he may, if he pleases, purchase fifty tickets, or more; and the larger his stake, as represented by the total amount he has spent on his tickets, the larger, of course, will his winnings be in the case of the numbers he has selected being drawn. I shall not puzzle my readers with the technical terms of the various "chances" upon which a gambler at the *Lotto* will risk his stake. In order to demonstrate the attractions of the *Lotto* it

will be sufficient to say that if, for instance, two numbers are staked upon out of the five that will be the winning numbers at Rome, or any other city which the player may fancy, an outlay of twelve centimes—that is, about one penny—will win a sum of fifty francs, or two pounds, in the event of those numbers coming out. As a rule, however, three numbers rather than two are chosen, since for some mysterious reason two numbers come out more rarely than three. In the case of the player on three numbers, his winnings are considerably less than if he had confined himself to staking on two numbers only. To stake on four numbers, and that these four numbers should all come out, is, indeed, a stroke of fortune for the gambler, and one which very rarely happens, though every year in one city or another it does "come off." In this case, a stake of, we will say, a franc would win a sum of about 300,000 francs, or £12,000. That all five numbers should come out in any one place is, I believe, an event which has never occurred, nor are the whole five numbers ever played upon. There are endless little details connected with the *Lotto* into which I will not enter; but, as a matter of fact,

the chances are fairly even that every now and then a frequent " player " will win. As to any dishonest manipulation of the winning numbers, this is made absolutely impossible. The drawings in the different cities in which the *Lotto* is held take place on each Saturday. The ninety different numbers are placed in a sealed urn or box, and a child, usually a little girl, is chosen at random from among the public assisting at the drawing who, under the eyes of the officials and the expectant crowd, withdraws in succession five numbers which consequently become the winning ones. The *Lotto* has its constant votaries all over Italy, and these are by no means to be found in the working classes only, but among all grades of the community. In Naples, and the south generally, the *Lotto* is universally popular, and even the very poorest will contrive to find a few centimes weekly in order to tempt fortune on Saturdays. A book exists called the *Libro dei Sogni*, the Book of Dreams—in which every conceivable subject has its number for playing on in the *Lotto*. You meet a funeral in the street, for instance, or you break something, and, if you are a gambler at the *Lotto*, you at once refer to this book for the

number mentioned in connection with the incident. There can be no doubt that this form of gambling, presented and deliberately encouraged by the State, is in itself immoral, and that it produces much misery in the poorest families, to whom even a franc wasted weekly is a matter of serious import. On the other hand, the State very justly argues that if the people did not gamble at the *Lotto*, they would gamble among themselves at the wine-shops; and that their losings are far better employed in swelling the coffers of the national exchequer than in passing into the pockets of other gamblers like themselves. The State, indeed, nets a very considerable annual revenue from the *Lotto*, amounting to several millions of francs annually.

Another extravagance of the Italian artisan, and of the working classes generally, a more legitimate, though equally dangerous one so far as his finances are concerned, is a passion for being well dressed. In comparison with his earnings, the money which the average working man spends on his clothes is very large; and in order to spend it he has frequently to stint himself in many ways, even in the matter of food. Nothing could

be less removed from the truth than the usual English idea that the Italians of the lower classes are careless of their personal cleanliness. They not only largely use the public baths which now are a feature in every Italian town, but they are very lavish in the use of soap and water in their own homes. As to their personal appearance, I will venture to say that not even the very poorest Italian artisan would dream of presenting himself in public in the attire or the general condition in which the British workman does not hesitate to show himself. An Italian friend of mine, well acquainted with every type of workman in his own country, recently accompanied me to England. It was the first time he had been there, and I am bound to say that he was horror-struck at the uncleanly habits and the untidy appearance of our working classes. To go into details, it would be impossible, I think, to find in the whole length and breadth of Italy an individual, even of the lowest and poorest class, who does not carry a pocket-handkerchief! I wonder in how many British workmen's homes napkins are forthcoming at meals! The well-to-do Italian artisan, however, generally uses these commodities. I am

afraid that we English, who like to remain under the impression that we are the cleanest and the most refined people in the world, have very little idea how some of our habits and customs strike the foreigner, and especially the Italian. Our public-houses and gin-palaces in the great towns are apt both to shock and disgust them, as well as other features of town life which I will not discuss—features for which the hypocritical and, from all moral and hygienic points of view, imbecile influences that make it impossible for our laws regulating certain subjects to be remodelled in accordance with common sense and due regard not only for public health, but also for public decency, are alone responsible.

Another thing that amazed my Italian friend during his visit to England was the appalling wastefulness and improvidence not only of our upper and more wealthy classes, but even more especially of those less well-to-do in the world. I remember on one occasion his pausing in a walk through one of the poorer quarters of London in order to moralize over the contents of a dust-cart which was removing refuse from an area we were passing. I may mention here that in no Italian town or city would the

law tolerate the removal of refuse except during the small hours of the morning. My friend pointed out to me some of the contents of that dust-cart. There were large pieces of bread, bones to which good meat was still hanging, vegetables, and divers other things which in no other country in the world would have been consigned to the dustman. I remarked that what he saw was merely a proof of the English ignorance of the most rudimentary rules of cooking. He had already discovered that ignorance for himself, however, from bitter experience; so my observation was unnecessary. I was obliged to agree with him that the yet serviceable food carelessly relegated to the dust-cart would, had the art of cooking ever been introduced to the greater British public, have sufficed to maintain a family for several days. I suppose that many thousands of pounds' worth of good food is daily thrown away in London alone; and this not only by the servants of the rich, who, as we know, have their own private reasons for wasting their employers' money, but by families in poor circumstances, to whom every shilling is of consequence. In no Italian household, rich or poor, does this spirit of wastefulness

obtain. That it does not do so is, no doubt, largely due to the fact that in Italy the rich man's cook and the poor man's wife—can cook! But, apart from this reason, wastefulness to an Italian simply implies stupidity, and with stupidity he has very little patience.

It is, I think, in Tuscany that the Italian working man is seen at his best. Perhaps this is because, as a rule, his employment is in itself of a more artistic nature than is the case in the great factories and workshops of the north, and of Naples. Perhaps, too, heredity has something to say in the matter, since such cities as Florence and Siena, and many smaller towns, have for centuries been famed for their craftsmen in the finer branches of manual labour. In certain places, it is true, the Tuscan workman has become imbued with socialistic and anti-clerical ideas; and in these places, as elsewhere, neither his character nor his trade has benefited therefrom. In such cities as Florence and Siena, however, the Tuscan artisan is usually still unspoiled. His natural quickness and keen sense of the artistic are very often extraordinary, and added to these qualities he is as often as not of a refined and gentle temperament, well educated, with

manners which many of far higher social position than himself might envy, and both sober and industrious. In the cities of Western Tuscany, however, such as Pisa and Leghorn, I cannot say that he is likely to be endued with any such qualities.

But I cannot sufficiently insist on the fact that in judging any class of the Italians of to-day one cannot, if one aims at forming any accurate judgment, take any particular city or district and base one's ideas of Italians as a whole on the habits, manners, and characteristics of its natives.

The foreign critic of modern Italy can only hope to form a fair opinion by studying Italian life in all parts of the Italian kingdom, and by, so to speak, striking an average among the very various types of the race which such a study will reveal to him. That this average, even taking into due account the most undesirable specimens of the Italian race, will eventually work out as a very high one as regards all those qualities which go to make a great and highly civilized nation, my own experience of many years has taught me. It has taught me, also, that the vast majority of my own compatriots, and, strange to say, among it not a few who have lived

among, but not in any sense with, Italians for years, have neither understood nor, as a rule, even realized these qualities, although ample proofs of them are afforded by the fact that in the short space of some forty years the modern Italians have succeeded in accomplishing what no other race has accomplished in very much more than that period. Some of the reasons why, in my opinion, and also in that of the Italians, we English have been unable to recognize and understand these qualities, I hope to make clear in another chapter.

CHAPTER V

THE COMMERCIAL AND PROFESSIONAL CLASSES

COMPARED with our own and other coal-producing countries, Italy, no doubt, cannot as yet lay claim to being a great commercial nation. Nevertheless, setting aside Milan, which is regarded as the commercial capital of the Italian kingdom, and which has long been a great trading and industrial centre, some of the larger cities such as Genoa, Naples, and Turin, and others of lesser rank like Bologna, Leghorn, Bari—to name only a few—are yearly increasing in prosperity and in their commercial enterprises. I warn my readers that this is going to be a dull chapter; but I hope they will not be unduly alarmed. I am not going to enter into the wearisome region of statistics, nor am I going to attempt to describe the many and varied aspects of modern Italian commercial life. These differ so largely in the various parts of Italy that it would be wellnigh hopeless to give any comprehensive account of them

in so modest a volume as this. Moreover, as the principal scope of these pages is limited to the desire to remove certain prejudices and misconceptions which exist in the minds of those who have omitted to include in their studies of Italy a study of the Italians, it would, I think, be well to confine myself to those minor aspects of Italian commercial life with which the average foreign visitor to Italy is most likely to be brought into daily contact, leaving its more important details to be considered by business men.

Now, there is one very general misconception as to one phase of modern Italian life which is deeply rooted in the British mind; and as the commercial element largely enters into this phase, I think this may be an opportune moment to combat that misconception. Italy, we are told—but not by Italians—is a cheap country in which to live. Our fathers and our grandfathers found it so, and therefore it must be so to-day. Never was there a greater error, nor one, I am convinced, which has led to more misunderstanding between English and Italians. Italy, no doubt, was a cheap country to live in, even as recently as, we will say, twenty years ago. But twenty years have made a

great deal of difference; and at the present time I have no hesitation in stating that, taking all things into consideration, it is more economical to live in London than in a great Italian city, or even than in many Italian country districts. Of course, to paraphrase a well-worn epigram, the cost of life largely depends on the liver. I am assuming, however, that the liver be an individual of modest income who wishes to lead as comfortable a life as his purse and his circumstances will permit. In old days English people could come to Italy to economize; and many a family was able to save a considerable portion of its income by closing the ancestral establishment at home, and retiring for a period to some Italian city. The former things, unfortunately, have passed away, nor are they at all likely to return. When I first came to Italy—a matter, I regret to say, of some five-and-twenty years ago—twenty-eight, and even thirty francs were given in exchange for an English sovereign. In these progressive days, twenty-five francs and, possibly, twenty centimes, is all that one may expect to receive. The franc—or lira—too, in those days, possessed an equivalent buying value, whereas its present purchasing

value certainly does not exceed sixty centimes, and often not as much. There is not, I suppose, a single article among what are termed the necessaries of life that has not, even in the last four or five years, risen largely in price, in many cases more than double. To this rise in the price of necessities must be added an enormous increase in the scale of wages, of house-rent, of rates and taxes, and, of course, in all articles contributing to comfort and luxury. Strangely enough, the average English visitor to Italy has never been able to realize this new state of affairs—that is to say, he has never been able to realize its true significance. He has heard from his youth upward, and his fathers have heard before him, that Italy is a cheap country; and when he finds himself called upon to pay prices higher than those he would pay in London, he is as likely as not to begin to curse and to swear, and to assert that he is being robbed because he happens to be an Englishman. Now, I am far from saying that he has not some ground for this last supposition. The Italians, also, have heard from their youth upwards, and their fathers (and grandfathers) before them, that Englishmen are made of money, and our

compatriots have certainly done their best to encourage and keep alive that very deplorable misconception. In former days the English milord would make periodical descents upon Italy, and astonish the natives by the number of his retinue, the general extravagance of his living, and the profusion of tips he was in the habit of giving. The tradition of the English milord has been handed down from father to son; and it is of no consequence whatever that the present representative of the type is usually an entirely modest, and often a somewhat impecunious individual, who has no wish to pay more than other people, and who is quite content to occupy a small room on the third floor of his hotel, instead of a suite on the first. There still exists, unhappily, a disposition on the part of Italians in all save the upper class, to regard the Englishman as something of a combination between a gold mine and a lunatic. To put the two cases briefly, the modern Englishman cannot realize that he has come to a country which is no longer a place in which to economize, and the modern Italian cannot realize that his English customer does not hail from a country boasting of cities the street paving of

which, as he has been taught to believe, presents that singularly vulgar characteristic attributed, we will trust erroneously, to a far more sacred locality.

I have suffered under this Italian misconception myself; and I, too, on occasions, have begun to curse and to swear. But my cursing and swearing has been directed rather against the foolish behaviour of my forefathers in implanting in the Italian mind a superstition that all English people have money to throw away, than against the Italians for continuing to believe in that superstition. The error, however, into which most English people of the present day who frequent Italy are apt to fall is this: faithful to the old English tradition that Italy is a cheap country to live in, they endeavour still to obtain their goods, and to pay their way generally, according to the scale of prices which might have been in vogue before 1870, when the unity of Italy was finally accomplished, but are certainly not so to-day. The result is, on the English side, that cursing and swearing to which I have already alluded, followed by the hasty assumption that all Italians are dishonest and avaricious. On the Italian side, the equally hasty as-

sumption is made that although English people are as rich as ever they were, they have become mean and altogether unreasonable. Knowing too well how much more he has himself to pay for every article he deals in, and how his own daily expenses in life have trebled and quadrupled themselves and are still increasing, the Italian commercial man, be he tradesman, hotel-keeper, domestic servant, or what not—for I use the term commercial in its widest sense—cannot understand why he should be expected to provide his goods or his services at a considerable sacrifice to himself. I have not the slightest intention of presenting the Italian commercial man, under any shape, as a paragon of honesty. Were I to do so, any Italian reader of these pages would smile compassionately. If he happened to be in "commerce" of any sort, I feel sure that he would laugh loudly. The foreigner, I fear, is in all countries the fair game of the native. He certainly is so in England, as I know from various experiences related to me by Italian and other foreign friends. The British pot cannot afford to call the Italian kettle black in this matter. The present King of Italy once related to me some experiences of his

own of British readiness to take advantage of the unsuspecting foreigner, on an occasion when, as Prince of Naples, he was in London in strict incognito. I could have told His Majesty, only I forgot to do so, how an Italian friend of mine, on arriving in London for the first time and speaking only a little English, alighted by mistake at Cannon Street station, under the impression that he had reached Charing Cross. He was obliged to take a cab to his hotel in the West End; and, on arriving at Temple Bar, the cabman drew up, and explained that he was forbidden by law to drive him any further, but that another cab would take him on to his destination. The fare asked, and paid, to cabman number one was ten shillings. Cabman number two demanded a similar sum on arrival at the hotel; and my friend was left under the impression that London was certainly the most expensive city in the world in which to hire a public conveyance.

The almost universal custom in Italian shops of asking one price for an article and taking another is, no doubt, annoying to English purchasers used to fixed prices. I believe, indeed, the prevailing idea that English people have always plenty of money

to throw away to be largely due to the fact that they will, as a rule, at once agree to the original price demanded, which is always a third, and very often nearly double that which after a little bargaining the shopkeeper will finally consent to take. And here I must confess that my sympathies are entirely with the English purchaser; for, even if he has bargained to his satisfaction, it is more than probable that he will nevertheless have paid a good deal more than would have been the case had he happened—not to be English. Neither will a tolerable proficiency in the Italian language save him, unless he be proficient also in certain indefinable methods of expressing himself in that language, which at once reveal to the man behind the counter that he is no stranger to Italy, and that he "knows his way about." The infinitely more convenient system of fixed prices is, however, beginning to spread largely in the more important cities; though I have often known even fixed prices to be considerably reduced by a little judicious argument.

Few things surprise an Italian visitor to London, or to any of our towns, more than the lateness of the hour at which shops and places of business generally open in the

mornings, and the earliness at which they close in the evenings. Indeed, it is not too much to say that a considerable proportion of the business of an Italian day is got through by an hour when in England shops, banks, and other places of business are only beginning to think about taking down their shutters. Curiously enough, of all the great Italian cities the capital is the most behindhand in the matter of shops. The usual answer of a Roman shopkeeper, on being asked for anything but the most ordinary articles of everyday use, is to the effect that he must write to Milan for it, or to Germany. Indeed, in the north, and also in the south of Italy, all branches of the trading community are far more alert, energetic, and business-like than their Florentine or Roman colleagues. As to the southern Italian, I must here do my best to remove the usual misconceptions entertained by my compatriots concerning Italians generally. The Neapolitan—Heaven alone knows why—is credited by English people as being indolence and vagabondism personified, as well as being ready at any moment to commit every crime mentioned in the Decalogue, as well as others which have been tactfully omitted

therefrom. As to Neapolitan morals, I freely admit that they are not of the Sunday-school order. But it must be remembered that at Naples the West meets the East, and that the Greek city by the sea is apt to look at these matters which are usually comprised in the term "morals" with an Eastern, rather than a Western eye. I think no writer has described the Neapolitan populace more concisely and more epigrammatically than the German historian, Von Raüber. "The Neapolitans," he says, "were created before the fuss arose concerning the seven deadly sins." Here we have in a nutshell the attitude of the Neapolitan towards what we usually mean to imply by the word morality. He is not immoral; he is simply unmoral. I am, of course, alluding to the populace as a whole. Those, however, who have occasion to know this people intimately, know that side by side with his unmorality the Neapolitan frequently possesses qualities which are by no means invariably to be found in his moral superiors. I will avoid this delicate subject, however, merely remarking, as someone—I forget who—has remarked before me, that morals are largely a matter of geography, and hasten to enter

my protest against the mistaken impression that the Neapolitans, and the southern Italians generally, are a lazy people, good for nothing but to lie in the sun and eat *maccheroni*. They are decidedly adepts at both these things, when they are not actually engaged in working. But when they are so engaged, there are no people who work harder, better, and more conscientiously. In this respect they are by a long way the superiors of the flaccid and indolent Roman, whose one object, as a rule, is to find any possible excuse for not working, in order that he may pass his day in a wine-shop. Neapolitans, Sicilians, and the races of the south generally, are not only of great physical strength, but are also endowed with an extraordinary quickness of brain and acuteness of intellect, coupled with wonderful powers of endurance. They play as thoroughly and as energetically as they work; and, as I have said before, they can bask in the sun and do nothing with altogether admirable efficiency. It is, perhaps, due to this last characteristic that the southern Italians, and especially the Neapolitans, owe their reputation for idleness and general incapacity, attributed to them by those who

have had no opportunity of seeing them at work.

Throughout Italy industries of all kinds are steadily increasing; and with the perpetual and striking improvement in the financial conditions of the country, the larger and more important commercial enterprises flourish accordingly. The larger shops, too, which have considerable capital behind them, are sharing in the general prosperity. But, side by side with this prosperity, the scale of living is, as I have already pointed out, daily becoming higher, and the cost of the necessities of life is ever rising. The consequence is that the struggle for existence, in all but the most opulent classes, is a hundredfold more severe than it was even in the Italy of a dozen or fifteen years ago. The immense strides made in the diffusion of education among classes which until comparatively recently were but little educated, and the gradual disappearance of illiteracy in the lowest class, has led to keen competition in every branch of enterprise and employment. The *dolce far niente* Italian of the novelists, the poets, and the guide-books, is an individual now only to be found among the ne'er-do-wells of the com-

munity who exist, of course, in all classes, but in a steadily diminishing number. The Italian of to-day has perforce to be both energetic and strenuous if he means to keep in step with the progress of his country and adapt himself to the exigencies of modern Italian life. Before leaving the subject of Italian commercialism, I must touch upon a point which, I think, merits the consideration of my English readers. A few years ago it was the boast of the Italian tradesman to produce genuine English goods; and these commanded a high price and were readily disposed of because, being English, they were considered to be, and in those days certainly were, the best of their kind on the market. Gradually but steadily, however, these English goods are disappearing from the Italian tradesman's stock. He has no further use for them. German-made articles have taken their place; and the unfortunate part of the affair lies in the fact that these last are not only very much cheaper, but also, as a rule, infinitely superior to the English manufactures that are now considered good enough for Italians by British firms. The quality of British goods, indeed, would seem to be steadily deteriorating, while their price

is prohibitive compared with those of German, Austrian, and French articles. German goods, on the other hand, are perpetually improving in quality, in variety, and, from the point of view of the purchaser, in price. Moreover, the German commercial traveller comes to Italy speaking the language fluently, and often admirably. He knows exactly what is wanted by his Italian clients, and brings those things with him. Also, his price lists are not written in German, in German coinage and German weights and measures, but in Italian. The superior British firm, on the contrary, is usually represented by an individual who seems to consider it a condescension on his part to trade with foreigners. He brings with him second-rate goods for which he demands large prices—and he demands them in English words, in English money, and in English weights and measures. The result is inevitable. The German commercial traveller scores; and his English rival often goes empty away, to tell his employers, no doubt, that Italy is a wretched country where the natives are too poor to buy his wares. This, of course, does not apply to shops in such cities as Florence and Rome, which lay themselves out to

please their numerous English customers; but it does apply to almost all shops dealt with by Italians, in all parts of Italy. I am glad to say that Italian products themselves are rapidly becoming equal, at any rate, to the inferior goods now sent out from England. Indeed, if the Italians would only realize it, they could very well do without either English or German-made articles, if they would encourage their own manufactures more freely. As it is, however, German competition is hitting the Italian tradesmen very hard—and not only the tradesmen, but also the artisans. In Florence, for instance, the goldsmith's and silversmith's art has existed on a very high level from the days of the early Middle Ages. Workers in the precious metals were, and are still in many cases, veritable artists. At the present time German machine-made goods, copied from Florentine designs, flood the Florentine market to the exclusion of native handwork. The consequence is that numberless excellent artists, capable not only of executing, but also of originating beautiful designs in metal-work and in jewellery, have been obliged to turn to other trades.

The space at my command will permit me

to give only a brief idea of the varied phases of modern Italian professional life. Undoubtedly the most popular of the civil professions is that of the Law. Italy, indeed, swarms with lawyers and notaries; and of law there is no end. Unfortunately, however, of justice there is extremely little. This, perhaps, is not altogether the fault of the lawyers, but is rather due to the complicated, and in many cases clumsy machinery of the Law itself. Nevertheless, the legal profession suffers, like several others, from the overcrowding consequent upon the spirit of ambition so prevalent among the lower middle classes in Italy to desert the occupations and trades of their fathers in order to enter the ranks of the civil professions or those of the bureaucracy. The effect of this on the legal profession is that, while there are, of course, very many lawyers and notaries who are honest and conscientious men, there are also a very large number who, in order to live, are compelled to be neither the one nor the other. As a rule, the less well educated an Italian is, the fonder he is of going to law with his neighbours. The most trifling matters, which could perfectly well be arranged in amicable conversation,

are taken to the notary or the lawyer, who too often succeeds in finding some legal excuse for making a long and complicated case out of them. The course of such justice as there is in Italy is, too, extremely slow. A trial on a criminal charge which in England would come on in a few weeks, and probably take at the most a few days to decide, is frequently delayed for a year or more before it comes to the Courts, during which time the prisoner, innocent or guilty, is kept in prison. And when the trial does take place, it is quite likely to be adjourned from month to month, and even from year to year, on some petty point of criminal jurisprudence. Every honest and conscientious lawyer and solicitor fully recognizes, and does not hesitate to say, that the whole legal procedure requires reformation and simplification before justice in Italy can be said to be either impartial or even, in many cases, obtainable. In Italy capital punishment does not exist, except in the case of certain offences against military discipline committed by a soldier; and these offences scarcely ever occur. The supreme penalty inflicted under the Italian law—for deliberate and premeditated murder without extenuat-

ing circumstances—is what is termed the *ergastolo*—imprisonment for life, with segregation of the prisoner. There can be no doubt that in reality the death penalty, properly carried out in private, is a far more humane sentence; but the idea of capital punishment is repellent to the Italian mind, and the modern Italian would certainly not tolerate the spectacle of public executions which still disgraces France.

The medical profession is throughout Italy composed of competent, and very often able practitioners; while in all the large cities, and sometimes in comparatively small provincial towns, are to be found clever doctors. In Rome, Naples, and, indeed, in many of the principal towns, there are physicians whose reputations have extended far beyond the frontiers of Italy. It is scarcely necessary to refer to the skilfulness of the modern Italian surgeons, since not a few of them possess a European fame. In all branches of science, too, are to be found men whose names are known to the whole civilized world, and perhaps by far the most important department of modern Italian literature is that dedicated to the natural and applied sciences. In all matters connected with

electricity, and especially as regards its practical application to the conveniences and necessities of daily life, Italy is immeasurably ahead of England. It will soon not be easy to find even remote country villages which are not lighted by electricity, or connected with their neighbouring local towns by the telephone. Electric trams and electric light railways are spreading like a network all over the country. But why should I dwell further upon such things? The nation which has produced a Marconi, and which, even in the days of our grandfathers, produced men like Volta, who were pioneers in electrical science, could scarcely fail to be the first to utilize electricity on a very comprehensive scale, and, indeed, to turn it into a kind of public servant. I will only add that in Rome and in the other large cities, as well as in country districts, the telephonic service does not form that incentive to the use of bad language which up to now has seemed to be the real object of British efforts at telephonic communication.

Among the various civil professions, that of a Government or municipal employé is the most sought after. Perhaps—and in this criticism I find very many Italians agree

with me—bureaucracy is the chief disease from which modern Italy is suffering—and it is a disease which is deeply seated. As I have already pointed out, it is the ambition of almost every family belonging to the agricultural and lower classes to have a son who is an *impiegato* in some Government or municipal department. A vast and ever-increasing crowd of applicants for these minor posts is always ready to make its voice heard; and every deputy of Parliament, every head of a department—anyone, indeed, who has the least "influence" even of the most backstairs description—is besieged by requests to further the claims of applicants for employment. These minor posts are almost always very underpaid, and there are, moreover, an enormous number of them. The English visitor to, we will say, an Italian post office will be surprised at seeing two or three men doing the work with which in his own country a couple of girls would be amply capable of dealing. The same thing may be said relatively of all Government and municipal institutions in Italy. It is perfectly true that in the public departments of the Government service, such as the post offices and the railway stations, an immense amount of

manual labour has to be got through, if only in writing out long, complicated, and innumerable forms before a packet can be registered or a piece of luggage forwarded to its destination. This cumbrous system, naturally, requires many more hands to deal with it than if it were, as it very easily could be, reduced to more simple and more practical proportions. The superficial critic of the Italians no doubt attributes this excess of "red tapism," which is so prominent a feature of Italian civic life, to a lack of the power of organization. He will probably, too, remain under the impression that the Italians are not aware of those obvious defects in their public administration. I can assure him that he would be wrong in both surmises. I have a very shrewd suspicion that the day is not very far distant when the Englishman, too, will find himself tied and bound by the chains of bureaucracy. It will certainly not be by the desire of the present so-called Liberal Government in England if he escapes those chains—and when they have once been forged upon him, he will not easily be able to rid himself of them in the future; nor will he find them decrease in weight with the passage of time. Bureau-

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cracy is the monster created by Democracy to be its servant—with a result similar to that obtained by Frankenstein in the well-known parable.

The Italians of to-day, on the contrary—I mean, of course, those among them whose racial shrewdness and common sense are not obscured by self-interests—are fully aware how very greatly the present complex system of the administation of their public affairs might be simplified, and how many miles of red tape might be unwound. Italian bureaucracy is rather a thing born of circumstances than a monster deliberately created. It must be remembered that all the great administrative departments of Italian public life had practically to be created at, so to speak, a moment's notice at the time of the conversion of Italy into a united nation. It must be remembered, too, that the newly formed Italian State had to recompense those who had fought for its formation, and whose readiness to unite themselves to it alone made its continuity possible. Once the new order of things had been established, the eyes of thousands of Italians turned to the State for posts in its services, and so the thin edge of

the wedge of Italian bureaucracy was inserted. Moreover, during the years immediately succeeding the unification of Italy, and, indeed, until very recent times, the Italian aristocracy, with a few exceptions, held itself aloof from taking any active part in political and administrative affairs. This attitude was, in a large measure, due to the hostile influence of the Church; and also, no doubt, to the fact that the average Italian of the upper class had never been trained to take any interest in public life. Many great Italian families, though fully sympathizing with the national movement towards independence and liberty, disapproved of the suppression of the temporal sovereignty of the Popes, and the transformation of Rome into the capital of the Italian monarchy. At no time, however, had the Italian aristocracy —or, perhaps, any other European aristocracy—devoted itself to working for the public good as has been the case from time immemorial with its counterpart in England. The "idle rich," whom Mr. Lloyd George and his socialist friends are so fond of denouncing, have, as these demagogues are of course perfectly aware, existed in England almost exclusively among the immediate descen-

dants of self-made men, for whom the traditions of responsibility attaching to the inheritance of family estates were, and are still, non-existent. The peer and the country gentleman who voluntarily give up their time, and not a little of their money, to working *gratis* for their country's good in ways too numerous to mention, have never had a counterpart among the Italian aristocracy, although in quite recent years this aristocracy is awakening from its lethargy and showing a laudable disposition to play a more active and useful part in public affairs. The comparatively limited number of intelligent Italian observers of the social revolution through which the present English Government are dragging the country—those who have had some opportunity of studying our English aristocracy on its own ground—look on with amazement at a nation which is allowing itself to be persuaded by a few demagogues into gradually reducing to impotence a class which, when all is said and done, has contributed not a little to the making of England, and to the building up of the greatest Empire the world has ever seen. However, this is a digression into a subject which, perhaps, has no busi-

ness to be introduced into these pages. It is, nevertheless, not an unwise proceeding occasionally to consider how "the intelligent foreigner" looks upon the throwing aside by England of traditions which have not only made her what she is, but have been the envy of the continental nations generally. I am quite aware that any reader of the Italian Press will tell me that the destructive and disintegrating policy of the present British Government is, on the whole, commended by that Press, as it is by the organs of many foreign countries. To this I will reply that the foreign Press in general favours, and will continue to favour, any British Government which by retaining office prevents the advent to power of a party which is pledged to reform British tariffs. Its reason for doing so is surely obvious. It is not a reason, however, with which consideration for British interests have anything at all to do. All the same, the intelligent Italian or otherwise, who has long suffered under the oppression of bureaucracy, is surprised, and also amused, at the readiness displayed by the British public to assume a burden from which, until its present Government came into office, it had been comparatively free.

CHAPTER VI

GOVERNMENT AND ARISTOCRACY

THE modern Italian is at heart and by instinct a democrat. Italian democracy is not aggressive, nor, except perhaps among a small and noisy band of advanced socialists, is it at all inclined to accept the untenable theory that all men are equals. That courtesy of manner and speech which is inherent in the true Latin races is equally to be found in all classes of the Italian community, at all events so far as their ordinary dealings with a stranger are concerned—even if this stranger be one of themselves. The off-hand, scarcely veiled insolence of manner and bearing which the Briton of modern times so often assumes in order to demonstrate his ideas of social equality could not, I think, be found even among the roughest of Italian workmen imbued with republican or socialistic principles. Indeed, the Italian language itself, and its use of the third person feminine in addressing anybody who is not a relative or an intimate friend,

forms a check to discourtesy. I do not in the least mean to say that when angry or offended an Italian is not capable of being as rude and discourteous as an Englishman—but never quite so capable, I am bound to say, as is a Frenchman or a German under similar circumstances. All that I mean to say is that, democrat at heart though he be, that peculiar form of snobbishness which so often makes the democratic Briton of the lower classes think he is proving his equality by being ill-mannered to a superior in social position, and which is also so often to be found among our middle classes, who seem to be afraid that courtesy may be mistaken for a confession to social inferiority, would be altogether foreign to Italian nature. Whatever his other defects may be, no Italian of any class is a snob. I must here observe that I am using the term "snob" in its purely British significance; for in Italy, and on the Continent generally, the word which has become common to many languages besides our own bears an entirely different sense. The fact that it does so may perhaps be taken as a proof that snobbery, as we understand it, is so far removed at all events from the Italian mind as to be incompre-

hensible. Italian democracy, indeed, is in itself a profoundly interesting study, even to one who, like the present writer, is unfashionable enough to regard modern democratic principles in general with a great deal of suspicion and not a little dislike. I believe, however, that the Italian democratic spirit may be said to be comparatively free from many of the objectionable features conspicuous in that of our own race. It is more natural and spontaneous; and it is not, and never has been, a spirit largely excited by demagogues. I am speaking, of course, of that true and inborn spirit of democracy which, I think, may be studied to greater advantage among the Italians than among other races, for the simple reason that it has not to any appreciable extent allowed itself to be led away by socialist theories that, in the end, will be found to be incompatible with national progress.

The Italian Parliament, as everybody knows, consists of a Senate, or Upper House, and a Chamber of Deputies. I do not propose to enter into the very complicated construction of this last body. It is given to few really to understand the tangled network of Italian home politics as ravelled and un-

ravelled by the various groups which compose the Chamber of Deputies; and it is no easy matter, even for Italians, to grasp the subtile shades of political opinion, and the ultimate aims and objects by which these parliamentary groups are influenced. No one is eligible for election to the Chamber of Deputies until he has attained the age of thirty. At the constitution of the Italian Parliament, the Vatican, in pursuance of its hostility towards the Italian State, issued a decree, commonly known as the *Non Expedit*, by which all Catholics were forbidden to vote at the parliamentary elections, though they were free to do so at municipal elections. It was hoped that this measure would result in creating for the Government an untenable political position. For many years, indeed, the abstention from the polls of many thousands of Catholic voters in all parts of the kingdom had, no doubt, a weakening effect. A large proportion of the population, loath to incur the spiritual penalties threatened by the priests, stood aside from the political life of the country, and formed a body either indifferent or openly antagonistic to the new order of things. It was obvious, however, that with the progress

of time such a measure as the *Non Expedit* decree could not bring about the results anticipated; and it yearly became more evident to the Vatican that, if the spiritual influence of the Church were not to be entirely sacrificed to political and temporal considerations, a hard and fast rule whereby no Catholics were to exercise the first right of citizenship must be modified. The *Non Expedit* decree has never been formally repealed by the Vatican; but of recent years, and especially during the present Pontificate, the ecclesiastical authorities of the various constituencies are permitted to dispense the faithful from its prohibition, under certain restrictions. Between this relaxation, then, and the attitude of the vast majority of Catholic electors which declines to admit the right of the Vatican to interfere in civil matters, the decree has practically become a dead letter; and, except in a very few districts, I imagine there are scarcely any Italians possessing the right to vote who abstain from exercising it from religious scruples. Unluckily, however, even now the Italian Chamber of Deputies cannot really be said to represent public opinion. The Government of the time being has far too

much power to influence general elections; and the multiplicity of political groups in the Chamber itself confuses and disgusts a considerable number of voters in all constituencies. Many of these abstain from voting for any parliamentary candidate, on the grounds that one political party is more or less like another, and that it does not therefore very much matter which party it may be that succeeds in forming a Government. But even this state of affairs is rapidly improving; and one of the many indirect consequences of the present war will certainly be that the marvellous consolidation of public opinion which it has evoked throughout Italy will react in a very remarkable manner on Italian political organization, and arouse still further the Italian people to exercise to the full their rights as citizens of a great nation.

The Senate, or Upper House, is not an elected body. Its members are created Senators of the kingdom by the Sovereign acting under the advice of his Ministers. This dignity is conferred not only on politicians and diplomatists, but also on individuals eminent in any branch of science and art, and upon those who have rendered

some distinguished and special service to their country. Among the Senators are not a few who represent the great families of the Italian nobility, and these, as in our own House of Lords, are intermixed with men who by force of intellect, utility to the State, and personal merit have in many cases risen from the middle and lower ranks of society. The functions of the Senate are much the same as those of our own Upper House before this last yielded a considerable portion of its very necessary prerogatives to a superficial popular outcry cleverly excited by a few demagogues. No democracy which has not sunk to a condition of mob rule has ever yet been able to dispense with the existence of a strong Upper Chamber of the Legislature; and certainly Italian democracy has never contemplated the trial of any such dangerous experiment. A proposed Act of Parliament, however, does not come before the Senate until it has been very thoroughly discussed in the Chamber of Deputies; and a Bill, therefore, although it may undergo a certain amount of remodelling at the hands of the Upper Chamber, is rarely rejected *in toto*. Nevertheless, this very remodelling is often invaluable, and even imperative.

Many measures directly bearing upon the progress and public advantages in provincial districts are apt to be blocked or rendered abortive in the Chamber of Deputies by the local jealousies and animosities which are very apt to exist between Italian provincial towns. A proposed scheme for a new line of railway, for instance, which would open up a large tract of country hitherto deprived of proper facilities for the transport of its produce, is quite likely to be violently opposed in the Chamber of Deputies by the representatives of some neighbouring town which fancies itself and its interests in some way aggrieved. The local deputy is very often also the local lawyer or prominent inhabitant of the commune, and he is therefore compelled to do what he is told to do by his constituents who, perhaps not unnaturally, do not always pause to consider questions of the kind except from the purely local and egotistic point of view. It is precisely this local egoism, if I may call it so, which strikes a foreign critic like myself as being one of the chief defects of Italian political and municipal administration. To further the supposed interests of one town or commune, the larger interests of perhaps a whole dis-

trict are ignored. Even after forty odd years of unity, it is strange how the ancient traditions of times when Italian towns and their neighbourhoods were Guelf or Ghibelline, and consequently at daggers drawn with each other, still linger. Until comparatively recent years villages and towns within sight of one another were practically inimical. An expressive term exists in the Italian language which accurately expresses this state of things—the word *campanalismo*—the idea that all who are not fortunate enough to be born under the shadow of one's native *campanile*, or church belfry, are to be regarded as *forestieri*, or backwoodsmen, and, therefore, more or less to be suspected and despised. This feeling, needless to say, is fast disappearing; but it is still to be met with in certain country districts, and also in certain cities in which it is not a little surprising that it should have lasted so long. It is still apt to crop up, too, in the Parliament, in such ways as I have already mentioned. The student of Italian history, however, will find no difficulty in accounting for this survival of medieval animosities; he will only have the more cause to sympathize with the difficulties of the Italians of to-day in having

had to deal with legacies left them by the Italians of yesterday, and to admire the tact, foresight, and perseverance with which they are steadily overcoming even the last remaining traces of those difficulties. Into the complex matter of Italian home politics I will not attempt to enter. Moreover, it is a matter that does not lie within the scope of the present volume. With regard to her foreign politics, modern Italy has invariably proved herself faithful to her alliances. She has also proved herself to be more faithful to her friends than, as recent deplorable events have shown, those professing friendship have been to her.

The term "aristocracy," as applied to a social class, is not one which commends itself to me, for reasons which will be well understood by many of my English readers. In Italy, however—a land in which, as I have pointed out, snobbery in the English sense of the word is practically an unknown quantity—the equivalent term—*aristocrazia*—may be employed without any suspicion of vulgarity. It merely marks the difference between a portion of the social community which possesses not only rank but also noble blood, and those sections which do not pos-

sess these accidental attributes. Every city, and indeed every province in Italy, has its own nobility; and in countless cases the names of these noble families are utterly unknown beyond the limits of their particular districts. The titles of many among them are of considerable antiquity, conferred either by Popes, or by the different sovereign rulers of the various Italian States before these were absorbed into the Italian kingdom. The majority of these families may be said to form the *petite noblesse* of Italy; but there are many among them which, from the point of view of ancient descent, are superior to not a few of the far more illustrious houses springing from families which have had the good fortune to number Popes or Cardinals among their collateral—and sometimes more than merely collateral—ancestors. Until comparatively recent times these provincial nobles lived for the most part on their own lands, and corresponded to our English country gentlemen of a century ago, who rarely thought of coming up to London, but resorted to the chief cities in their respective counties for their society. In all the great Italian cities, however, were to be found the representatives of the highest

nobility of the land; and in such cities as Rome and Naples these representatives bore, and still bear, some of the most ancient and historic names and titles in Europe. In Rome, Naples, Florence, Milan, Turin, Genoa, Venice, Palermo, the majority of these ancient families, some of which can show an unbroken descent of seven or eight hundred years, and a few of a considerably longer period, still retain their magnificent palaces —buildings to which the most stately of our London residences are mere dolls'-houses. It is true that, owing to the vast size of these palaces, which were built in the ages when each family had its own armed forces numbering hundreds and sometimes thousands of men, only a single floor may be actually occupied by its owners; but this floor is apt to contain a suite of apartments and domestic offices covering a space to obtain which it would be necessary to throw four or five houses in, we will say, Grosvenor Square or Carlton House Terrace into one. The prevalent idea in England that all Italians possess a title, and that all these titles are, to use a popular phrase, out at elbows, is entirely erroneous. No doubt incomes, such as many of our own great

nobles possess, are very rare in Italy. But then, again, the life of the Italian *aristocrazia*, even of the highest grade, is far more simple a one than that led by those who occupy a similar position in England. Entertaining on any large scale is the exception in Italian palaces, and not the rule; while the entertaining of any but the most intimate friends and relations in the country is practically never thought of. At the same time, when a great Roman house, for instance, does entertain, it is on a scale which for picturesque and stately magnificence could not be rivalled in London or in any other capital. The gorgeous suites of rooms which many of the Roman palaces in particular contain, their priceless works of art and decorations from the hands, perhaps, of some of the greatest masters the world has ever known, form a setting beside which the majority of the world's royal palaces are poor and tawdry in comparison. Of recent years Rome has become the centre of Italian social life; and the great families of other parts of Italy as a rule now come to the capital for the "season" instead of remaining in their own local cities. As to attempting to describe Roman society as it is to-day, for any

such description from my pen I must refer my readers to *My Italian Year*. I am only concerned in these pages in giving some slight account of the place occupied by the Italian aristocracy in the Italian community at large. There can be no doubt that in former times it did not, as a class, recognize the responsibilities entailed by the possession of rank, large landed estates, and wealth as has always been, and, whatever our demagogues may say, is still the case with our own titled and untitled *noblesse*. The "idle rich" with us are, as a matter of fact, to be found rather among those whose fathers have made their money and bought their lands, and perhaps their titles, than among those who have nherited these possessions through past generations, and have at the same time inherited the traditions of responsibility attached to them. That very many "idle rich" of this last class in Italy do in reality exist is, I am afraid, undoubtedly the case. It is only comparatively recently that the Italian *aristocrazia* has begun to cast aside the absurd and fatal idea that because an individual happened to be of noble birth he could not without losing his dignity embrace any profession or definite occupation in

ife. The introduction into Italy of the Napoleonic Code, under which primogeniture was to all intents and purposes abolished, and, consequently, landed estates exposed to constant subdivision in order to provide for the legal claims of younger children, in a very few generations placed the *noblesse* in a very different position financially from that which its forefathers had occupied—as, of course, it was intended to do. The last few years, however, have wrought a great and beneficial change in the ideas of the Italian aristocracy. Young men who would have thought it beneath their dignity to increase their incomes by any other means than that of gambling are now beginning to enter the civil professions; while the present war has revealed the fact that as soldiers and sailors they are second to none in courage and patriotism. It must be remembered, too, that for many years after the unification of Italy political life was closed to any member of their class who was not bold enough to regard with contempt the thunders of the Vatican and the disapproval of relatives and friends. Now all this has changed; and, like his compatriots belonging to less elevated grades of society, the Italian aristocrat of

to-day is not the useless individual of yesterday. The change is as yet, it is true, only partial; and I fear that the useless individual is still far more prominent than he should be—but even he is rapidly beginning to realize that he *is* useless, and that unless he is to go under altogether he must rid himself of certain ideas and make himself useful to his country. Much is being done by the Italian ladies of the *aristocrazia*. As a rule, they are better educated and better read than the men, and as mothers and wives they are, in countless cases, setting a good example to their menkind. Some of the greatest ladies in Rome, as well as in other cities, lead the most energetic of lives, ever ready to assist in any work that is for the public good. This cannot but have its effect on the coming generation of Italian aristocracy.

But the loftiest example of all comes from the loftiest quarter. The King and Queen of Italy, by their unvarying sympathy, their ceaseless energy, their quick perception of the needs both moral and material of all classes of their subjects—and, last but not least, their utter indifference to personal danger or discomfort when any work of

duty or mercy calls them—set a constant object lesson before the eyes of their people. How well this object lesson has been understood and appreciated is testified by the love and gratitude their people bear them. Whatever his political views may be, however much he may be opposed to monarchy as a system, there is no Italian worthy of the name who does not recognize a true friend in King Victor and a gracious and kindly benefactress to his country in Her Majesty the Queen. In any part of their dominions, however remote, whenever some catastrophe has occurred bringing suffering and death to the population, the sovereigns of Italy have hastened to the spot. The quick, practical insight possessed by the King has never failed on such occasions to initiate prompt measures of relief which in too many cases had been undreamed of by local officialism; while these measures have been materially seconded by an unstinted generosity. The presence of Queen Elena, readily exposing herself to the same dangers threatening the people, her tender yet eminently practical sympathy, and her technical knowledge of how best to alleviate pain, both physical and mental, has in such calamities as that which

overtook Messina and its district caused her name to be as a household word for maternal tenderness, and also for quiet and unassuming courage, in every Italian home. As to King Victor's qualities as a constitutional sovereign who is at the same time probably one of the best statesmen in Europe, these, I imagine, are recognized universally. What, perhaps, is not recognized by the vast majority of Englishmen to whom the Italians are an unknown people, is the enormous influence which the present occupant of the Italian throne has ever since his accession been quietly and unostentatiously exercising both on the character and on the destinies of his people; and how in his own person he represents all that is best, and all that is rapidly becoming the most typical in a chivalrous, courageous, and eminently practical race which has no intention of submitting any longer to be scolded, lectured, and patronized as the "spoilt child of Europe."

Since this volume was in the press, a dastardly attempt has been made upon the life of the Italian Sovereign. By the blessing of Providence the attempt failed; and its only result was to evoke a universal tribute of

enthusiasm, affection, and respect for King Victor Emanuel III and the House of Savoy, not only from Italians but from the whole world. Once again the calm, imperturbable courage of the Princes of that House showed itself in the face of imminent danger. The King treated the affair with the utmost indifference; and immediately afterwards drove to the hospital to visit the officer of his bodyguard who had been seriously wounded by one of the bullets aimed at himself, unaccompanied by escort or police. The courage of Queen Elena was not less splendid. Her Majesty was the first to notice the would-be assassin taking deliberate aim at the King; and in a moment she had interposed her own person between him and the levelled revolver. The real instigators of this abominable attempt will, perhaps, never be known —or, perhaps, it would be more accurate to say that the Italian authorities would never allow their names to transpire; although few people entertain any doubt as to the quarter from which the blow was originally aimed, or as to the identity of the foreign body which inspired, corrupted, and armed the would-be assassin.

CHAPTER VII

CHURCH AND STATE

As I have already pointed out in a preceding chapter, one of the greatest, if not the greatest problem by which the makers of modern Italy were confronted, was that presented by the hostility of the Church to the existence of an Italian monarchy having as its capital and seat of government Rome, the ancient City of the Popes. This hostility was inevitable; and equally inevitable and imperative was the necessity imposed by force of circumstances on the newly formed Italian nation to suppress the temporal sovereignty of the Head of the Roman Church. This temporal sovereignty, however advantageous to the political and social conditions of Europe during the Middle Ages, had long become not only an anachronism, but a perpetual danger to international peace, and, at the same time, an incubus to the Roman Church itself, so far as its freedom to pursue its lofty spiritual mission unfettered by considerations of

purely worldly policy was concerned. Into the long series of bitter animosities which lasted for very many years between the Vatican and the Italian State it is not necessary to enter in these pages. Those animosities have, fortunately, practically ceased to exist. The claim of the Popes to temporal sovereignty has become a matter of history to the modern Italians, while the Vatican, although compelled to reassert that claim on formal and official occasions, and to enter a periodical protest against the confiscations of its former territories and against the presence in Rome of the Italian sovereign and his Government, has recognized that the " usurpers " are in reality its best friends, and that without their presence and moral support it would be in a far more precarious state than was the case even when it could only maintain its pretensions to civil jurisdiction and temporal sovereignty by the aid of foreign troops called to Rome to protect it against its rebellious subjects wearied out by long centuries of priestly misgovernment. I have already alluded to the measures taken by the Government of Italy to ensure to the Vatican its full privileges as the seat of Government of the

greatest spiritual Power in the world, and to ensure to the Popes all the attributes of a free and independent sovereign whose temporal claims alone it was compelled in the interests of the Italian nation to disallow. Those measures were, as I have said, enframed in what is known as the Law of Guarantees; and although this Law has never been accepted by the Vatican, its provisions have nevertheless been scrupulously observed by the Italian State. That the Vatican should have refused to accept from the Italian Government any such pecuniary indemnity for its sequestrated territories as was proposed in a clause of the said Law was a refusal undoubtedly not only dignified, but also imperative. The acceptance of a yearly sum of money from the Royal Government would have reduced the Popes to the position of mere Italian archbishops, instead of free and independent spiritual sovereigns over a kingdom knowing no racial or geographical limits.

It is the habit of most English journals, and perhaps, also, of most English individuals, when discussing Italian political and social affairs, to talk of Italian "anti-clericalism." Now, it is scarcely an exag-

geration to say that anticlericalism in Italy is as dead as Queen Anne in England. It existed, and existed very widely, up to even a dozen years ago; while for many years previously it was probably stronger than any other political opinion among the mass of the Italian people. I may, perhaps, while treating of the relations at present existing between Church and State in Italy, be allowed to observe that there is, I believe, no writer on Italian subjects who is more persistently and more bitterly accused of being imbued with the spirit of anticlericalism than myself —by my English critics. I have always noticed that if, in any of my novels, for instance, I am at pains to describe a good type of Italian priest—of which there are many—such a character passes without criticism, and probably without observation. If, on the other hand, I describe with equal fidelity an unworthy ecclesiastic—of which, also, there are many—I am at once accused of a violent and bigoted anticlericalism. I mention this fact merely because such an accusation proves to me at once how very little those who make it know, and how much less they are capable of understanding, either the Italian attitude towards the clergy,

and towards religious faith generally, or that of the Italian clergy towards the laity. In *My Italian Year* I dealt with this attitude more fully than space will permit of my doing in these pages; and the consequence was that my English critics, both public and private, shrieked bigotry and anticlericalism at me very loudly. I fear, however, that their shrieks left me unconvinced—for the simple reason that, in nearly every case, the statements I made in that book on this particular subject, and the conclusions I drew from them, were directly obtained from priests of my acquaintance, some of these being of humble rank, ministering to peasant populations, and other high dignitaries of the Church. After reading the strictures of my English critics, then, I was left with the consolatory reflection that I shared my anticlericalism and my anti-Catholicism with the worthiest and most honourable types of Italian ecclesiastics! The truth is, however, that the Latin attitude towards dogmatic religion and its ministers is scarcely comprehensible to the Anglo-Saxon mind. Our English Roman Catholics, in this respect, are not really *Roman*—but Anglo-Catholics. With them, as with all Anglo-Saxon cults,

even the most Protestant among them, the priest, clergyman, or minister is elevated, of course unconsciously, to the condition of a kind of fetish—a being mysteriously endowed with qualities lacking to the majority of his fellow-men, and, as mysteriously, exempt from certain human passions common to all human nature. Any inclination, therefore, to regard clerics of any denomination as ordinary professional men carrying on their business according to business-like principles, is at once condemned by Anglo-Saxons, Catholics and Protestants alike, as being necessarily anticlerical or anti-religious. The average Latin, or Italian, view of the matter is very different; and it is, perhaps, this Latin view which long residence in its midst has caused me to adopt—to the illogical though perfectly natural indignation of my English critics, journalistic and otherwise. As, however, I am writing not about English matters, but about Italian, I fail to see why I should be compelled to present my descriptions of Italian characteristics from an English standpoint; and I shall therefore confess myself to be incorrigible enough to brave all accusations of "anticlericalism" or "anti-Catholicism,"

and repeat to a certain extent in this chapter dealing with the actual conditions existing between Church and State in Italy statements already made in *My Italian Year*. For these statements, as I have said, I depend not on my own personal experiences and observation, for these, unconsciously to myself, might perhaps be influenced by Anglo-Saxon limits of vision in matters relating exclusively to Latin psychology.

Among the Italians of to-day I really should scarcely know where to turn in order to find that "anticlericalism" of the past which is still believed to be a prominent feature in Italy by English journalists, and especially by those who contribute to English Catholic organs. Anticlericalism, it is true, exists as a catchword chiefly employed by socialist agitators and others who appeal to the more ignorant among the working classes. But even by these it is a catchword which has been largely discredited—for the very good reason that it no longer catches.

I think that anticlericalism, except of the most passive and harmless kind, where it continues to exist at all in Italy, exists only as a mask to cover subversive social opinions of a far more perilous nature, the holders of

which have their own excellent reasons for not wishing openly to associate themselves with the doctrines they are able to propagate under its shadow. That twenty years ago a very bitter hatred of the priests and of the Church generally was widespread among Italians is undoubted; neither can it be denied that the bitter anti-Italian spirit which dominated the policy both at home and abroad of the Vatican during the greater portion of the pontificate of Pope Leo XIII, had its natural result in producing a counter spirit bordering upon that of petty persecution among a people which saw every upward step taken towards national progress and national unity thwarted by a power which, not content with fomenting perpetual difficulties of an internal nature for the Italian Government, was constantly intriguing to create for Italy embarrassments and complications with foreign States. It was rare in those days to find a bishop or archbishop of an Italian diocese who was not openly antagonistic to the Government and the Monarchy, and the clergy as a whole very naturally assumed the attitude imposed upon them by their superiors. But twenty years have brought about a great change in the

relations between Church and State; and both parties have recognized that in these days, when the forces making for lawlessness and disorder are ever seeking to promote social discontent, a permanent condition of antagonism between them would be not only detrimental, but positively dangerous, not to Italy or the Church alone, but to all Europe. It may seem a paradox, but I think that if at the present time I were to go about Italy in search of "anticlericalism," I should look for it rather among the ranks of a certain section of clerics than among those of the laity. I am referring, of course, to those priests who, in a laudable attempt to reconcile the teachings of medieval dogma with the discoveries of modern research, have fallen into that chaotic line of thought called Modernism, which has recently been so vigorously condemned by Pope Pius X. The fact is that the whole fabric of Latin Catholicism is far too delicately constructed to admit of the taking away of a single one of the supporting stones of dogma. In reality, all that the Church asks of those who find their reason to outstrip their faith, is that they should hold their tongues and keep their ideas to themselves. The vast majority

of Italians, and among them very many priests, hold their tongues. A small proportion of these do so out of loyalty to the Church, and also because they are sensible enough to realize that Catholicism contains only two ways—its own, and the way out. But, again, the vast majority of Italians of all classes do not trouble their heads to reason concerning matters of religious faith. The subject has not the slightest interest for them; and nothing astonishes an Italian so much as the immense importance attributed by English people to questions of dogma and ritual. A shrug of the shoulders, and the observation "*storie dei preti*"—priests' tales—quickly dismisses a subject which bores him extremely. The Englishman, no doubt, would immediately conclude that his Italian acquaintance must be "anticlerical" or anti-Catholic in his opinions to be able to display such contemptuous indifference. Most probably, however, his Italian acquaintance is neither the one nor the other; but a more or less "observing" Catholic who attends mass and supports the religion of his country. The dogmatic teachings of that religion, its forms, symbols, and ceremonies, he regards as no affair of his. They are

matters which concern the priests—the stock-in-trade of an institution he is proud of, and whose "way" he accepts simply because it would not be worth his while to take that other "way" which he vaguely realizes would be the only alternative one left to him. That is the average Latin attitude towards the Church; and no doubt it has always been the average Latin attitude towards dogmatic religion and the priesthood—and this not in later ages only, but also in those preceding the adaptation and absorption by Latin Catholicism of the older forms of religious observance. I do not mean to imply that there are not countless Italian Catholics who honestly and entirely believe in the letter as well as in the spirit of every dogma and article of faith, and also in every "pious tradition" taught or accepted by the Church. I am very certain, however, that these last form a comparatively small and ever-decreasing minority so far as the male portion of the community is concerned; for, even in the southern parts of the Italian kingdom, religious practices which even a few years ago were regarded more or less as genuine articles of faith are gradually being recognized for what they really are, namely,

survivals of some of the grosser forms of superstitions connected with the cults of former times, and in no way representing true Catholic teaching.

It must not be forgotten that the Church, from the very earliest times—indeed, from the very commencement of her existence in Italy—has been quite as much a political as a religious institution. Political motives, as every student of history is well aware, have almost invariably guided her actions in the past, not only in Italy, but in England and in every country in which she has sought to make her influence predominate. So-called religious persecutions, the Inquisition, the crusades against the various Protestant sects, all these may be said to have been in reality undertaken far more for the sake of worldly interests than for any great zeal for the Catholic faith; while the same may be said of Protestant outrages upon Catholics in our own country and others. The unification, then, of Italy; the expulsion of the foreign Catholic princes reigning over Italian States; the transformation of Rome into the capital of the new kingdom; and the suppression of the temporal power of the Papacy —all these things represented blows dealt

not at the spiritual, but at the political constitution of the Roman Church; and it was by political counter-attacks that the Vatican endeavoured to minimize the effect of these blows. The result was the rapid growth throughout all sections of the Italian community, except, of course, the great Roman families who owed their lands, titles, and wealth to the Vatican, of a very bitter anti-clericalism which no doubt in many individual cases also led to hatred and contempt for the Church and Catholicism generally. On the whole, however, Italian anticlericalism, even in those days, did not by any means imply anti-Catholicism; and it is precisely this distinction, which perhaps could only exist among a Latin people, that English critics, and especially English Roman Catholic critics, of the Italian attitude towards the Church have very seldom been able to grasp or understand. The suppression by the Italian Government of a large number of the monasteries and convents which covered the land, and the sequestration of their property, has been invariably condemned as an act of robbery and persecution. But those who have so condemned it have either been ignorant of, or kept silence

as to the fact that these institutions, however laudable and useful in their origin, in very many instances had become little more than refuges for the idle, trading establishments able to undersell the market because they had not to pay their labourers, or political centres using the wealth and influence at their disposal to assist the Vatican in its campaign against the Italian nation.

The proof that Italian anticlericalism has always been a purely political movement may be found in the fact that it has practically ceased to exist as an important element of public opinion; while the reason for this lies in the fact that the Italian clergy as a whole are animated by a very different spirit from that they were compelled to maintain during the years when Pope Leo XIII occupied the Papal throne. It is now an exceedingly rare thing to find an anti-patriotic priest in Italy; and even the high dignitaries of the Church, although obliged to maintain a certain purely official attitude of reserve on certain points, are Italians at heart and loyal subjects to the civil as to the spiritual sovereign.

As to the religious attitude of the Italians of to-day towards the Church—and I am,

of course, alluding to the general attitude of the majority—this is a far more difficult point to explain, since it comprises some of the most subtile distinctions peculiar to the Latin mind; and anyone who has studied the workings of that mind knows how great its subtlety and elasticity can be.

I have already attempted to describe the mental attitude of the average Italian peasant who, while careful and even eager to support his church even at considerable sacrifice to his pocket, nevertheless is profoundly sceptical as to the truth of all that his priests tell him. This scepticism is by no means confined to the peasant. It is inherent in the entire Italian race, and in all branches of that race. To the average educated Italian, the Church represents not so much a spiritual fabric in which he is sure of finding future salvation, as a great national institution of which he is very proud, as being typical of the influence of the Latin race upon the thought and intellect of the world. He may rail at the priests, laugh at the ceremonies, deny the dogmas; but when it comes to the point, he will oppose any measure tending to lower the prestige of the Latin Church in the eyes of foreign nations.

Although he may not be himself aware of it, there lurks at the back of his mind pride in the Papacy as an institution of purely Italian origin and development exercising a power more world-wide than that which the Roman Empire ever wielded. He may detest the methods of this power, and believe, with every reason, that it is injurious to the progress of any nation that suffers it to become a dominating influence; but he recognizes that any attack on the institution which was in reality to cause its overthrow, or even to exile its seat of government from Italy, would be a deadly blow aimed at his nation, and at all the Latin peoples. The death of the Papacy as an Italian institution would mean an immense material loss to Italy—a loss not merely sentimental, but financial and political. In reality, therefore, the Italian educated man of all classes regards the Church in exactly the same way as does the peasant; except that the peasant is naturally unable to distinguish between the religious part of the Church as represented by his priest, and the political part as represented by the Vatican. Of the last the peasant knows nothing, and cares less. It is too far removed from his sphere of existence.

If he thinks of the Pope at all, he thinks of him as a successful priest who has managed to secure to himself a good and lucrative berth. We have only, I think, to enlarge the picture a little in order to see it in its true proportions. The peasant supports his parish church, its miraculous Madonna, and its window dressings generally, chiefly because he well knows that by doing so he is supporting the local reputation and the financial interests of his community, and therefore his own interests—while the educated Italian passively supports the Church as a great national institution because he is well aware that by doing so he is supporting the interests both of his nation and of his race. This attitude, however, does not prevent the educated Italian from being quite as sceptical, if not more so, than the peasant; but both alike are able, thanks to their Latin mind and Latin temperament, to combine scepticism with conformity, and to leave all responsibility as to the truth of what they may hear from their priests to the priests themselves, without troubling their heads further about the matter. This attitude, of course, must be *anathema* to English Catholics, or to English people generally who

take their religious beliefs very seriously. Perhaps, however, one like myself who has become inoculated with Latin feeling on these subjects may be forgiven if he finds the usual attitude of Italians towards the dogmatic portions of their religious faith more logical, and also more modest, than that of the great majority of Anglo-Saxons. The attitude, indeed, of the modern Italians in these matters—and I suspect this attitude to have been much the same in all phases of Latin civilization and under all forms of religious belief—may be summed up by paraphrasing an observation made by Professor Huxley on a certain occasion. "If," he remarked, "a person asserts these things to be so, I must ask him how he knows it. If he asserts them to be not so, I must still put to him the same question."

I should here, perhaps, observe that I have hitherto been attempting to describe the Italian attitude towards the dogmas of the Church, and to the Church as an institution of supreme national importance. There is, however, another question to be considered; and this is, the attitude which the modern Italians of all classes are rapidly beginning to assume towards those things which are

not in any sense dogmas of the Church, or even, necessarily, articles of faith. They are things which, in technical language, the Church proposes to be believed. Now, it is this attitude—an attitude which may be described as one of revolt of reason against superstition—that is mistaken by English critics for anticlericalism and anti-Catholicism. There could not be a greater mistake. The countless objects endowed with supposed miraculous powers which exist in so many Italian churches are rapidly becoming recognized for what they are; and their exploitation for money-making purposes is now very generally realized. Such impostures are now beginning to be regarded as insults to reason, and as deplorable survivals of an unprogressive past which the Italians of to-day are anxious to forget. There exists, too, a very general recognition on the part of large numbers of good and enlightened priests themselves that such objects and the superstitious outbursts to which they so often contribute, are a real source of danger to the faith of thousands who not unnaturally argue that a Church which permits and encourages such imposture must constitute a retrograde rather than a progressive element

in the national life. There is also another reason for the resentment which the whole category of miracle-working pictures and statues and their attendant rites arouses in the modern Italian mind. It is a reason which I have not seen dwelt upon by any English writer on the subject; though it is, I think, very worthy of consideration. No one who is not either very prejudiced, or who refuses to accept as facts phenomena which have been proved beyond all question of doubt to have been brought about by no imposture or fraudulent means, can treat as impostures the very marvellous cures frequently taking place at such places as Lourdes and other spots of a similar nature; and there can be little doubt that purely natural psychic phenomena, still declared by the priests, and believed by the populace to be directly caused by semi-divine and therefore supernatural intervention, do occur at many famous Italian shrines. Moreover, I should be very sorry to place myself in the untenable position of asserting that these phenomena could not be the result of indirect supernatural intervention. Were I thus to range myself on the side of the superficial, or on that of the contemptuous materialist, I

should at once expose myself to being asked the question asked by Professor Huxley to which I alluded just now—a question to which I suppose neither he nor any other person ever obtained a satisfactory answer while in this life. Modern research into the psychic powers latent in the human organization prevents any but the most ignorant, or the most bigoted, from dismissing as superstition or imposture phenomena which may at first sight appear to be supernatural. I think that it is fairly well established, and admitted by most unprejudiced minds, that very many of the visions, miracles, cures, and such-like episodes, said to have occurred to, or by the agency of, many of the medieval saints, and declared still to occur even in our own times, were by no means the idle or fraudulent inventions which Protestantism and Materialism have too often unhesitatingly asserted them to be. I am quite prepared to admit that so far as miracle-working pictures and statues of the Madonna or the saints are concerned there is much invention, and plenty of fraud. But there is often something else besides. There are undoubtedly instances in which earnest faith, as some would

call it, in the healing or beneficent powers of some specially venerated object, or an intense process of mental concentration and auto-suggestion as others would call it, have produced very remarkable and very immediate results. The materialist, and perhaps the Protestant, will, if they accept them, be disinclined to attribute them as being even indirectly due to the intervention of any divine or semi-divine agency; while others will not so limit their interpretation, but, while readily granting such direct causes as auto-suggestion or some other psychic influence of the kind, will recognize a yet higher influence working behind and through those causes. Now, there is no country in Europe in which scientific research into every branch of psychic development is more carefully and exhaustively studied than in the Italy of to-day. Some of the foremost scientific men are devoting themselves to furthering our knowledge of ourselves, if I may so put it, and to the examination also, from the cold, impartial standpoint of experimental science, of those phenomena which some assert to be the result of imposture or self-delusion, and which others thankfully receive as the first dawnings of any real

knowledge regarding the conditions of the human spirit after the death of the body. A large scientific literature has been produced of recent years in Italy dealing with psychical phenomena in all its forms; and there is no doctor or medical student who does not hold very different and wider ideas concerning the limits of the purely natural from those held by the medical profession of a generation ago. Now, of all the civil professions, excepting the legal, the medical profession is probably the most popular in Italy. Medical students may be numbered by the thousand, and they come from all classes, even from the peasant class. Through them, through their university friends, and through their relatives and former companions in, perhaps, some remote mountain town or village, has filtered a stream of entirely new ideas concerning phenomena which until recently were regarded as direct intervention of the Madonna or the saints by those who accepted them, or as delusions or impostures manufactured by the priests by those who did not. I have no doubt that to this increased knowledge of psychical possibilities, however crude and inaccurate it may be, is very largely due the

great change which has recently taken place throughout Italy in the attitude of the modern Italians towards the supernatural generally, and especially towards the supernatural as manifested in the miraculous Madonnas and other sacred objects in their churches. Phenomena which were either attributed to holy agencies, or scoffed at as impostures, are now beginning to be regarded from a less superstitious or less contemptuous point of view. Lest it may be supposed that my argument is far-fetched, and that it is unlikely that scientific ideas concerning the psychic forces of humanity should have found their way into remote Italian country districts, I can only say that I am stating what I know from my own personal experience to be true; and several priests of my acquaintance whose churches contain objects of the kind I have named tell me that some among their congregations, composed for the most part of agricultural labourers, do not hesitate to attribute to natural causes episodes which a few years ago they would have attributed to the Madonna. There are not wanting, either, many honest priests who not only do not combat these ideas, but even encourage

them. These last are men broad-minded enough to accept a natural explanation of phenomena as to the divine or semi-divine origin of which they must have had many and grave doubts. They are men, too, long-sighted enough to realize that the days of religious imposture are over; and that if the future generations of Italians are to continue to be even passive upholders of the great dogmas of the Church, any further attempts to insist upon a miraculous cause for occurrences capable of a purely natural explanation could but be injurious to the spiritual interests of the Church, however much they might contribute to local parochial finances. The problem still remains, of course, how to put an end to ecclesiastical encouragement of a superstitious view of these occurrences without damaging not only the financial interests of a considerable number of the clergy, but also those of the country towns and villages, and the poorer quarters of such cities as Naples, in which these miraculous objects chiefly exist. Every year, however, witnesses a decline in superstition; and events which a few years ago occurred so frequently as to pass uncommented upon by the public, are now becoming so rare as to

be mentioned with compassion and disgust by the Press, and generally deplored as a relapse to the ignorance of the Middle Ages. The anticlericalism, in the usual sense of the term, of the Italians of to-day is nearly entirely confined to an ever-increasing contempt for those clerics who still encourage the more ignorant portion of the populace to believe to be "miraculous" certain manifestations which, although sometimes not actually impostures, have nothing of the miraculous or supernatural about them—and this form of anticlericalism is, as I have said, shared by a large and growing proportion of the more honest ecclesiastics themselves. I have dwelt at some length on what I may term the social side of the relations existing between Church and State in Italy; and I have endeavoured to show that that spirit of hostility which animated both parties a few years ago is now limited to a comparatively small number of fanatics belonging to each, who do not by any means represent the opinions of their compatriots, whether lay or clerical. The only real "anticlericalism" existing in Italy to-day is that which aims at reforming certain abuses on the part of the lower clergy to which I have alluded, and which

regards with sorrow, and also with disgust, the continuance in a more enlightened age of certain superstitious practices encouraged for purely financial reasons which have nothing whatever to do with Catholicism, but are mere excrescences, and remnants of the ignorance of past centuries. Of this species of anticlericalism, as I have said, not only all sensible and enlightened Italian laymen of every class are guilty, but also all the intelligent and honest clerics. I cannot, therefore, but regard it as unfortunate that any English writer on Italian subjects who ventures to proclaim himself to be in sympathy with this very legitimate and strictly orthodox movement on the part of a highly civilized and progressive Catholic people, should at once be accused of anticlericalism in the usual sense of the term, and of being imbued with a spirit of anti-Catholicism. Such criticism, however, merely proves how very incompetent those who deliver it are to judge of Italian feeling on certain subjects, and how impossible it is for them to understand that the Catholic Church in England and the Catholic Church in Italy, though one in points of dogma, entirely differ in their methods of procedure.

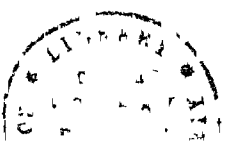
With regard to the official relations between the Church and the State, these are, fortunately, far more harmonious than is usually supposed to be the case. The Sovereign Pontiff is absolutely free to exercise his spiritual power, and also to pursue his political relations with foreign countries by means of the ambassadors and diplomatic agents he sends to and receives from those countries. The Vatican, and various other Papal palaces, are exterritorialized, and at their thresholds the authority of the civil power of the Italian kingdom ceases. That the Popes still profess to be unable to leave the precincts of the Vatican is, of course, a mere political "game" on their part.. It is a "game," moreover, which is in reality played in partnership with the Italian Government. Reasons of State, as well as reasons of foreign policy, make it undesirable in the interests of both Vatican and Quirinal that the Pope should abandon his attitude of protesting against the occupation of Rome by the Italians. The protest has become, as I have already said, merely a formal one, to be renewed at stated intervals and on certain occasions. His present Holiness, Pius X, is in all respects a different personality

from that of his predecessor Leo XIII. The last, of noble family, had received his earlier training as a diplomatist accredited to foreign Courts. He had all the ramifications of foreign policy at his fingers' ends, and his intellect was probably second to none in Europe—for he defeated Bismarck. Keen, hard, and subtle, Leo XIII was always rather the sovereign-statesman than the sovereign-priest. Italian though he was, he was bitterly inimical to the new order of things in Italy; and his anti-Italian policy, reflected by the greater number of his bishops and archbishops in the Italian provinces and by the Cardinals, not only prolonged the existence of Italian anticlericalism in its most unworthy form, but alienated from the Church and religion vast numbers of his countrymen both in Italy and abroad. Nevertheless, he was a great political Pope, and under his pontificate the political power of the Papacy, which had become weakened throughout the world by the repeated shocks it had received, gradually assumed an importance and influence such as it had perhaps never before wielded on so world-wide a scale.

The present Pope, on the contrary, comes of humble stock. He is neither statesman

nor diplomatist; nor does he profess to be so. Such matters are left to his Cardinal Secretary of State to deal with—and there are many who consider that His Eminence does not discharge his functions with any conspicuous success. Pope Pius X is before all things a noble-minded and conscientious priest, who looks at the spiritual rather than the worldly side of the greatest position any human being can be called to occupy. He is an ardent reformer of ecclesiastical abuses, and during the years that he was Patriarch of Venice he showed himself to be an able organizer and administrator, a patriotic Italian, and one who earned the respect and admiration of all classes from the lowest to the highest. Having himself been a priest of humble origin, probably no one realizes better than Pope Pius X the urgent needs for reform among the country clergy—and, indeed, among the lower ecclesiastical grades generally; nor can anyone better realize the needs, both spiritual and material, of the people to whom those clergy are called to minister. Under Pope Leo XIII the spiritual work of the Vatican was largely put aside in order to further its political and international aims; but Pius X uses his influence

in the reverse sense. Under this influence a steady work of internal reformation is being quietly and unostentatiously carried on in nearly every diocese in Italy. The number of idle priests who swarmed throughout the country, anxious only to say a mass here and there in order to pocket their two francs for saying it, have been greatly reduced. It is only very recently that, recognizing the abuses to which the excessive number of saints' days observed as holidays had led, the Pope issued a decree eliminating the majority of these days from the category of those upon which no labour was to be done. In the past few weeks the Pope has also issued a decree prohibiting the ordination to the priesthood of any candidate under twenty-eight years of age, in the interests of clerical morality. In fact, I greatly fear that His Holiness Pope Pius X must be characterized as an anticlerical by very many English Catholic critics of his spiritual policy!



CHAPTER VIII

MODERN ITALIAN LITERATURE

It would ill become an English writer who is attempting to present to his readers a sketch of modern Italian life to leave modern Italian literature out of the picture; since the contemporary literature of any nation forms a not unimportant clue to the actual temperament and characteristics of that nation.

My observations, however, on this subject must be brief, and, I fear, in no way worthy of it; for to give anything but a passing and superficial account of Italian literature of the present day would entail more space than is at my disposal.

As a matter of fact, modern Italian authors are practically an unknown quantity in England. Perhaps I may even go further, and say that with a few exceptions they are not nearly so well known in their own country as they ought to be. In England, I suppose that Gabriele d'Annunzio is probably regarded by the reading public as representing

contemporary Italian literature both prose and poetry—and also, perhaps, dramatic. As to the right of d'Annunzio to be considered as being so representative, I feel that I must be careful how I comment upon it. It is a right, I think, which would be, perhaps, violently asserted by a certain portion of the Italian public interested in literary matters, and as violently denied by others whose opinion is fully as worthy of consideration. I may, perhaps, be forgiven if I say that personally I have always wondered why this distinguished and talented writer and poet should be named in England whenever modern Italian authors happen to be discussed. I suppose that only an infinitesimal number of English people have been able to read either his poetry or his prose in the original Italian; and it will be admitted, I think, that Gabriele d'Annunzio's works, and especially his poetical works, depend more upon the rich splendour of their language than upon any very striking or unusual wealth of ideas. This very richness and splendour must, perforce, be lost in translation into another tongue; and yet it is undoubtedly in translation that d'Annunzio is known to a certain section of the English

reading public. As to his poetry, I suppose this is known only to those of the English reading world who are acquainted with Italian. Many of his novels have, of course, been translated into English, and it is from these, undoubtedly, that he is known in England. And this, I may explain, is precisely the reason that makes me wonder why an author who is primarily—and very primarily—a poet should, being secondarily—and very secondarily—a novelist, be quoted so frequently by my compatriots as being practically representative of contemporary Italian literature, when, according to the judgment of a very large and authoritative portion of the Italian reading public, there are many Italian novelists more worthy to represent it.

An Italian author of the present day, even one of the highest literary attainments, labours under great disadvantages as compared with his compeers in England. His public is, at the best, a comparatively small one; and his earnings, I imagine, would ill compare with those of certain of our own novelists who, possessed of popularity, have not troubled themselves as to cultivating anything so unnecessary to popular success

and large royalties as literary art. My conclusions may be due to error, but when, as is frequently the case, I read the works of living Italian writers who are practically unknown even by name in England, and but little known to the greater public in their own country, I cannot help feeling that Italian publishers are very greatly to blame for what I may describe as a system of suffocation of modern Italian literary genius. The reading market in Italy—I mean, that market which exists to supply the general reader—is flooded with cheap and bad translations of French novels of the fleshly and realistic school, and in their eagerness to thrust down the throats of the Italian public of the middle and lower classes such authors as Emile Zola, they neglect native writers many times superior to him from every point of view. Perhaps the fact that reading is still, in Italy, regarded as something of a luxury by those very classes which, with us, are the greatest readers, may have something to do with this attitude of the Italian publishing houses. Moreover, when I hear English people in Italy remark that Italians never seem to read, I sometimes feel inclined to reply that we English would read

far less than we do if we possessed the Italian climate. The better-educated individuals of our middle and lower classes, in their leisure hours, have, during long months of the year, no sunshine to attract them out of doors, none of the lovely southern nights during which nobody who is not a student or a professional literary man wishes to sit in the house over a book. Such persons in England, therefore, if reading be their taste, resort to the public libraries and to their clubs—and so the extreme unpleasantness of the English climate during many months of the year—and in some years during all—probably accounts not a little for the fact that reading is a more general pastime in England than it is in Italy. It follows, therefore, that the Italian publisher cannot afford to be so generous in the matter of encouraging native talent as his English colleague; and he is obliged to fall back on the reproduction of exotic fiction, chiefly French, for the rights to republish which he has to pay little or nothing—and trust to its erotic quality for its sale! In the meantime Italian literary geniuses, except a limited few whose names are sufficiently popular to ensure the publishers against loss, remain

neglected in their own country, and therefore neglected in other countries where they would find appreciation. It is a pity; for among the contemporary Italian writers in all branches of literature are many genuine artists whose work is brilliant. Moreover, it is work often superior in its freshness and spontaneity, as well as in its idealism, to that of Gabriele d'Annunzio, who too frequently casts a thick veil of egoism and brutality over his compositions which does much to conceal, and even to obliterate altogether, the talent that lies behind them. Such writers as Carducci, De Amicis, and Foggazzaro, who, in some ways, may perhaps be termed the greatest of modern Italian novelists, such powerful pens as those of Verga and the Sardinian authoress Grazia Deledda, are, of course, known to a certain limited section of the English reading public; but of very many others—of Ada Negri, to mention only one among prose writers when I should name perhaps nearly a score, of poets such as Giacosa, Arturo Graf, Pascoli, and a dozen others—how much has penetrated into English homes and public libraries in which d'Annunzio's novels have been discussed as representative of modern Italian

literature? In journalistic literature, too, the Italians of to-day possess many brilliant writers. And yet, strange to say, if one happens to be in any of the larger Italian hotels to which foreigners resort, and especially those hotels which have an English *clientèle*, one has in nine cases out of ten to buy one's Italian journals in the street. They will not be found in the hotel reading-room, though probably newspapers of all other countries will be there. The consequence is that the English reader has very little chance of acquainting himself on Italian matters even if he goes to Italy. It may be said that comparatively few English people can read Italian. But unless a person is more than usually ill-educated—which, unhappily, in the matter of foreign tongues most Englishmen are—it is not a hard matter to gain the sense of an article written in an Italian newspaper. But, indeed, the one aim and object of my compatriots when abroad seems to be to avoid as much as possible any contact with the people and the life of that country, and to occupy themselves only with things belonging to its past—and in this object they are admirably seconded, in Italy, by hotel-keepers and hotel employés

who as often as not are Germans. It is not for me to make suggestions, but, all the same I would submit to my Italian friends that they are altogether too modest in certain particulars. The unfortunate foreigner who comes to England has, in the matter of making himself understood, to get along as best he can. If, for instance, he happens to be an Italian, he will not find Italian newspapers in his hotels, neither will he find Italian spoken in the shops he may enter. Everything will be English—aggressively English. No single taste or requirement of his will be studied from the moment he lands at Dover till the moment he leaves it. In Italy, on the contrary, all tastes are studied in places as a rule frequented by foreigners. The Italian only is treated as the foreigner in such places. If he wants to glance at an Italian newspaper, it is ten chances to one that he has to send out to the nearest newspaper stall to buy it. And yet he is in his own country!

In all branches of technical literature the Italians of to-day have contributed in the most remarkable way. Science of every kind, philosophy, art, medicine—all these have a vast and ever-increasing literature

of their own in Italy, and those who have contributed to it bear some of the highest reputations in Europe in their different lines. Perhaps one of the most striking features among this more technical literature is the number of works dealing with physiology in all its branches. The work of research being carried on in this department of science is of an especially exhaustive and brilliant nature. It is not much talked about, and, of course, appeals only to those who are interested in following the gradual expansion of the limits which we are most of us inclined comfortably to accept as those of the powers and capabilities of human nature, immediately assuming anything appearing to be beyond those powers as either supernatural occurrences or imposture, according to our religious or irreligious convictions. The works to which I refer are to the full as acute, lucid, and profound as even those of a similar kind written by French investigators in realms similar. Indeed, the whole field of scientific literature is represented in Italy to-day in a manner which places her on a footing equal with, and in some points superior as regards scientific research, to that occupied by any other nation.

Into the subject of modern Italian art I do not propose to enter; and, indeed, I should not have ventured to enter into that of modern Italian literature were it not that some brief observations, however limited, and perhaps erroneous as to their conclusions, seemed to me to be unavoidable in a volume dealing with the social conditions of a country.

CHAPTER IX

THE ITALIAN SOLDIER

ALTHOUGH Italy is a military nation, her militarism is by no means aggressive; by which I mean to say there is none of that friction between soldiers and civilians which so frequently occurs in countries such as Germany, in which the Army is placed on a pedestal apart from and above other sections of the community. In Rome, for instance, which is, of course, the head-quarters of an Army Corps, and which contains a very large garrison, the military element is singularly unobtrusive compared with that existing in other continental capitals. The officers who are admitted into the "society" of the Italian capital are few in number; and these few belong, as a rule, to the cavalry regiments into which, or the Navy, the *noblesse* for the most part prefers to enter. Very many of the officers of the infantry regiments, indeed, do not greatly differ from their non-commissioned officers and men in point of birth and breeding; and it is not an unusual

thing to find a simple private who is a far more polished gentleman than many of his military superiors, except, perhaps, in the matter of education. But education, at all events among Italians, does not necessarily mean refinement of tastes and ideas, and those subtile qualities which go to make what we call a gentleman are inherent in countless Italians whose schooling has from force of circumstances been limited to that which their native village or country town could supply.

Conscription, as everybody knows, is in force in Italy. With certain exceptions, all who have reached the age of twenty are obliged to serve in the Army or the Navy. In the Army the term of service, except in the cavalry regiments, has lately been reduced from three to two years. But even at the conclusion of this term an Italian cannot call himself a free man until he has reached the age of forty. He may at any moment be called upon to undergo periodical trainings in camp, to take part in manœuvres, and, of course, to go on active service should war break out. It is obvious that such a system must entail an immense dislocation in civil life, and that it must frequently cause serious detriment to the private interests of the

individuals from whom such a sacrifice is demanded. The fact, however, that this sacrifice is cheerfully made by the modern Italians is a proof that the common advantages ensuing from it undoubtedly outweigh the hardships it involves. That conscription can ever be popular in any country could only be maintained by a confirmed militarist. That it is a source of inestimable good to the countries which have adopted it the most confirmed anti-militarist, such as myself, must admit, unless he allow his prejudices to obscure his judgment. Few people who have not lived side by side with the lower classes in Italy, and who have been behind the scenes of their daily life, can, I think, realize the prodigious sacrifice that universal conscription entails on the nation at large. On the other hand, none but these, perhaps, can better estimate the enormous advantages, both physical and moral, it brings in its train. When one sees a young lad who, possibly, is gaining not only his own livelihood, but adding to the resources of his parents, obliged to give up his employment for two whole years in order to serve in the Army; when one knows that, instead of the earnings he has placed at their dis-

posal for the common good of the family, his parents have to supply him with money; when one sees some promising young employé or artisan compelled to relinquish a hardly-won post at the very outset of his career—then one is apt to curse conscription, and to wonder at the patience of a people that can submit to its tyranny.

But when, on the other hand, one compares the youth who returns to his native village or town with the same youth who left it as a conscript, one is obliged to confess that he has usually been the gainer by his sacrifice —and not he only, but his country. In nine cases out of ten he returns from his military service a stronger man both physically and morally than when he entered it. If he does not do so, it is fairly certain that under any circumstances he would have been no credit either to himself or to the community. He has experienced discipline; and through discipline he has learned to command not only himself, but others. Anyone who has followed the vicissitudes of Italian rural life will have had occasion to observe the effect of two or three years' military training on peasant lads and on youths in the small country towns. He will notice, too, how

superior the men who have returned from military service in the last six or seven years are to those who served their term previous to this period.

The conditions of military life in Italy have been steadily improving under the reign of the present Sovereign. As Prince of Naples, King Victor made himself thoroughly acquainted with every detail of the soldier's life; and in the ameliorations which have taken place in that life since he ascended the throne his influence may in all probability be traced. His keen interest in everything to do with the Army is unflagging, and it is said that nothing escapes his eye. Formerly the soldier was regarded as little more than a machine by the military authorities. Little was done to improve his education, or to raise him in his own estimation. Barracks, in the majority of cases, were merely monastic buildings hastily readapted to secular purposes, and lacking everything conducive to sanitation and cleanliness; while little or no attempt was made to provide reading and recreation rooms for the men who had to inhabit them. The enforcement of a rigid discipline was considered to be the only duty of the State towards those who were

to be its slaves for three or more years; and this, unaccompanied by any refining elements, tended rather to brutalize than to elevate the soldier's character. Nowadays, however, all this is changed. The authorities have recognized that strict discipline is by no means incompatible with refining and civilizing elements in barrack life. Education, study, and legitimate recreations are encouraged, and the modern barracks, especially in Rome, are models of their kind.

The Italian soldier's day begins early. In the spring and summer months the bugles sound the *sveglia* at 4.30 a.m., and in winter an hour later. After dressing, the soldier if he chooses can have black coffee and bread before the first drill or instruction. At ten o'clock rations—the *rancio*—are served out, consisting of soup and the boiled meat from which it has been made, and a measured quantity of brown bread. Wine is supplied once a week in barracks, and twice daily in camp or on marches. After this more drill takes place till twelve o'clock, when two hours' repose are obligatory, and the men are supposed to spend them in sleep. From two to half-past four there is more drill or instruction, and at five the soldier is free to

leave barracks until nine o'clock in summer and half-past eight in winter. By those hours, unless he have special leave, which to men of good conduct is granted readily enough, he must present himself in barracks again. Half an hour afterwards the bugles sound the *silenzio ;* and after this no talking is permitted in the dormitories. The private soldiers usually sleep twelve in a long, lofty room, and each room is well ventilated and has an electric light kept burning throughout the night. This routine, of course, is varied by long marches both by night and day, by the various services required in the place where the regiments may be quartered, and, in the summer and autumn months, by instruction camps and manœuvres. The marches undertaken by such regiments as the Bersaglieri, who cover five miles an hour over any ground and any distance, and the Granatieri, or Grenadiers, are often extremely severe, sixty miles not being considered anything specially remarkable.

Perhaps the most disagreeable of the many duties Italian soldiers are called upon to perform in times of peace, is that of maintaining public law and order during strikes and social or political agitation. The Army,

indeed, may be said to exist quite as much to defend Italy against internal enemies as against external ones. The patience and good temper with which the troops often meet the grossest provocation on the part of unruly and ignorant mobs is worthy of all praise. But it is not only at moments of social unrest that the Italian soldier is called upon to display his discipline, his humanity, and, very often, his personal courage.

It is considered incumbent on any man wearing the King's uniform to render aid whenever and wherever it may be needed for the protection of life and property, and for the repression of crime. In cases, too, of disasters owing to earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and other causes, the troops are the first to bring assistance and encouragement to the sufferers. It is no wonder, therefore, that the nation at large regards the Army as a protector at home, a safeguard against foreign aggression, and a great moral weapon available at any moment against the unruly forces, not only of humanity, but also against those of Nature, to the violences of which whole districts and populations are too apt to be suddenly exposed.

The fine horsemanship of the Italian cavalry is now recognized all over Europe; while Europe, too, has lately been compelled to recognize the consummate marksmanship of the riflemen and the artillery. A magnificent corps, too, are the Corazzieri—the Royal Bodyguard. It must be confessed that for smartness and for the physique of its members, as well as for the *tout ensemble* of men and horse, the Corazzieri are far more imposing than our own Household Cavalry. There is no trooper in this corps whose height is less than six foot one or two—and many are considerably taller. It is difficult to believe that the large majority of these men are peasants. They are magnificent specimens of humanity, and as a rule exceedingly comely of feature as well. A very few months in the atmosphere of royal palaces and functions has rid them of all uncouthness; for the Italians of all classes are nothing if not adaptable.

A conscript belonging to the wealthier classes may, by paying a sum of twelve hundred and fifty francs—fifty pounds in our money—serve for a year only, and such "volunteers," as they are called, have certain minor privileges accorded to them. These,

however, do not exempt them from being obliged to perform the same duties and lead the same life as any peasant or working man who is serving the full term. By no means all, however, can afford this sum, even among the better born and better educated conscripts—and it is to these last, for obvious reasons, that the military service is the most displeasing. Nevertheless, I have known more than one young lad—gentlemen in every true sense of the term—decline to allow their parents to make any pecuniary sacrifice to enable them to join as *volontari*—and some, too, I have known who, although perfectly able to pay the required sum, have preferred to go through their full term of service for the sake of experience and adventure. The percentage of those who elect to remain in the Army as a profession is, apart, of course, from the officers, extremely small. The pay of a private soldier in time of peace is about a penny a day! In the general way, the victim to conscription regards his military service in the same way as a schoolboy regards his term at school. During the last year of his service he counts the days and the weeks which must elapse before the moment arrives when he will be called up

before his colonel to receive his discharge.

To see an Italian soldier drunk, or in any way misconducting himself in a public place, is exceedingly rare—so rare, indeed, that it would leave an extremely disagreeable impression on the witnesses. That there are black sheep among them is, of course, a foregone conclusion—but justice compels me to say that the British soldier might well take a lesson from the Italian soldier of to-day as to orderly conduct and seemly behaviour during his hours of liberty. Indeed, the men of any one of the more important Italian regiments who misconducted themselves in a public place would, in addition to the severe punishment administered by the regimental authorities, undergo a very bad time of it at the hands of their own comrades.

Considering all that the average Italian conscript has to give up, and the duties he is called upon to discharge; considering that from the time he is twenty until he has reached forty he cannot really call himself an absolutely free man; considering, too, that soldiering is often repugnant to his nature and ideas, I venture to doubt whether there be any nation that could show so universal

a spirit of quiet and unobtrusive determination and self-sacrifice as that shown by the modern Italians. I have not, in this chapter, made any special mention of the Italian Navy, for the simple reason that the characteristics of the Italian soldier apply equally to the sailor. In the following chapter I propose to deal with a few of the cruel calumnies which, as an Englishman, I am ashamed to confess have been published by English journals and uttered by English individuals on the honour and humanity of Italian soldiers fighting in the cause of civilization against barbarous and treacherous foes. The causes which compelled Italy to declare war on Turkey have been systematically and purposely withheld from the British public by a Press which, with very few exceptions, has not scrupled to attribute the basest and most dishonourable motives to the Italian Government for having gone to war; while the same Press has published with alacrity any foul slander against Italian humanity and chivalry emanating either from Turkish sources or from sources interested for financial or political reasons in securing for those slanders a wider circulation in England. At the same time, many of

these newspapers have declined to publish communications from Italians, and from correspondents well known to be competent to speak with authority on matters connected with Italy—and it has been of no matter if, as in my own case, these communications have been directly based upon official reports from the highest Italian military and civil authorities, and upon documents in the possession of the Italian Foreign Office, which the Government of Italy have courteously placed at my disposal. The English Press, with a few honourable exceptions, and among these I would specially mention the *National Review*, *Daily Telegraph*, and the *Spectator*, has deliberately closed its columns to any attempt to place the case for Italy fairly and honestly before the English public. The result has been the practical destruction of the long and sincere friendship entertained by the Italian people for England, and a very bitter resentment left in the Italian mind at the base ingratitude shown by Englishmen towards the one nation in Europe which, when British honour and humanity were vilely slandered at the time of the Boer War, contemptuously refused to listen to those slanders or to give any encouragement to

the authors of them. It is not for me to surmise as to the reasons which may have induced the Press and a large section of the British public to assume an attitude so inconsistent with all our national traditions of fair play; nor do I care to dwell upon the reasons which at once presented themselves to all intelligent Italians as the only ones which could possibly account for that attitude. I am only concerned in these pages in giving to my readers some account of the people which have been so cruelly and, I may say, so treacherously misrepresented during the last few months by English journals, and by individuals who have been determined to regard all Italian statements as false, and all Turkish, or pro-Turkish, statements as true. It was originally my intention to have confined this little volume to a simple description of the various social sections forming the Italian community, and to endeavour to point out how very different in character, temperament, and aims the Italians of to-day are from the people they are supposed to be by English men and women who have not had the same facilities for knowing them at home as have fallen to my lot. The strange and unaccountable outburst of hostility

towards Italy, however, on the part of the majority of the English Press, and the refusal on the part of several of the leading English journals to publish any refutation from my pen of the calumnies they had not hesitated to publish in order still further to foment that hostility, have decided me to include in this volume an article of mine lately published in the *National Review*, for permission to reproduce which I am indebted to the courtesy of its Editor, and also extracts from those official documents to which I have already alluded as having been placed at my disposal by the Italian Government to use at my discretion. It will be seen, then, that in my statements as to the true causes which led to the Italo-Turkish War, in my demonstration of the falsity of the charges of "aggression" and "brigandage" brought against Italy for having landed an army in the Tripolitania, in my assertions that the so-called massacres of innocent Arabs by Italian soldiers were in reality but very necessary measures of severity dealt out to a horde of barbarians at a very critical moment when severity meant salvation for every Christian in Tripoli, and in my descriptions of the unparalleled horrors

to which Italian soldiers have been subjected at the hands of those for whom our English journalists have displayed such sentimental sympathy, I am not drawing on the imagination of a writer of fiction, but on official information contained in documents bearing the signatures of men of the highest political and military position whose word is surely as worthy of credence as that of newspaper correspondents, and very much more so than that of Turkish officials belonging to the Young Turk party, who stand convicted of having from the very commencement of the present war deceived their own countrymen and the Arab tribes by converting every Italian victory into an Italian defeat, and, as I shall presently show, of having accused the Italians of inhumanity when they themselves were instigating and assisting at atrocities on wounded Italian soldiers of a nature so horrible that I am obliged for decency's sake to suppress the greater part of the details mentioned in the reports from which I am about to quote.

CHAPTER X

ANTI-ITALIAN CALUMNIES

A GREAT deal has been said, and perhaps still more has been written, during the last few months of a nature not only grossly offensive to Italian humanity, but equally so to Italian political honour. When Italy found herself compelled to declare war against Turkey, the English Press, with only a very few exceptions, at once accused her of having dealt a stab in the back at a friendly Power at that moment in the throes of a constitutional crisis. Italian action in occupying Tripoli was characterized as one of unprovoked aggression and brigandage. The British public, with the exception of a certain limited number of individuals who not only knew the real nature of the people of modern Italy, but who had also followed the course of Italian dissensions with Turkey during the years immediately preceding the outbreak of the war, very naturally re-echoed the sentiments of the Press, having no other means of forming their opinion. For the

British public there was every excuse; for the Press, to which that public trusted as a well-informed guide, there was none. No attempt was made to place before the people of this country the reasons which might have impelled the Italian Government to take so serious a step as to break the peace of Europe at a moment when that peace was already gravely menaced, and when a terrible war which would have been disastrous not only to the nations actually concerned in it, but to the whole world, had only just been averted. These reasons, however, must have been well known to that great factor in our daily life which assumes to itself the responsibility of enlightening and guiding English public opinion on matters of politics both home and foreign. There is probably no people in Europe so indifferent to and ignorant of the affairs of other nations as our own; or more apt to forget they are no longer the favoured inhabitants of Shakespeare's "sceptred isle" only, but that they form the heart of a vast Empire which cannot afford to continue the policy of splendid isolation belonging to the past, which the changed conditions of the world generally render impossible. The British public, then,

entirely ignorant as to the real nature of the questions at issue between Italy and Turkey, and ignorant even of the existence of any such questions, accepted without hesitation the hasty and superficial assumptions which were placed before it by their daily press. I have had occasion of late to address Italian audiences on this point, and also to dilate upon it in articles I have contributed to leading Italian journals. On these occasions I have been careful to explain that, from the British outlook, the attitude assumed by my compatriots was entirely reasonable. Not only did the average Englishman honestly believe Italy's apparently sudden and unprovoked action against Turkey to be both immoral and unjustifiable, but he regarded it as an assault upon a nation towards which he had ever entertained friendly sentiments. He also regarded it with not unnatural alarm from a personal point of view, since he was assured by his newspapers that it would in all probability lead to an outburst of Moslem fanaticism against Christians generally, and he knew that the British Empire contained more Mohammedan subjects than own allegiance to the Turkish Sultan.

I will now proceed to mention some of the principal causes which compelled the Italian Government to send to Turkey the famous ultimatum that immediately led to the outbreak of the present war between the two countries. The vast majority of English people have, as I have said, been kept in complete ignorance of these reasons. I quote from a document sent to me through the Italian Foreign Office. It is an official statement drawn up by the Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Marquis of San Giuliano, and signed by him. As a former Ambassador to England, this statesman is well known to a large section of English society, and no observations of my own are necessary to emphasize the value and the integrity of his official Memorandum.

"The conflict between Italy and Turkey which would appear to have broken out unexpectedly is, in reality, only the epilogue to a long series of annoyances and injuries, not always apparent on the surface of things, directed against Italy and the Italians by the Ottoman Government. For a considerable period, innumerable complaints had been received by the King's (the Italian) Government from all parts of the Turkish Empire,

seeking protection against constant exactions, the impossibility of obtaining justice, and the invariable tyranny to which they were exposed—all redress for which things was invariably refused."

Here follows a long list of detailed examples which need not be reproduced here.

"Numerous other complaints and an infinity of controversies of greater or less gravity exist, such as, for instance, insults and aggressions committed against individuals belonging to the Italian Consulates in various portions of the Empire; the massacres at Adana in 1909 and the sacking of the agency of the Italian General Navigation Company at Santi Quaranta. These acts of aggression were such as to demonstrate that for some time Italians were surrounded by a hostile atmosphere irreconcilable with the good relations officially existing between the two States. And with the new *régime* (that of the Young Turks), which had aroused so many hopes in Italy, these deplorable incidents only became more frequent and more serious. But the most persistent examples of the aversion and hostility of the Turkish authorities have been demonstrated in those portions of the Ottoman Empire in which

Italian interests were most prominent, such as in the Red Sea and the Tripolitania. The attitude of the Turkish officials in the Red Sea and on the Arabian coast opposite our Eritrean colony has constantly become more violent and more provocative. The list of insults offered to the Italian flag is too long to be included in this paper. We will only quote some which have taken place under the new *régime*. On June 5th, 1909, the Turkish gunboat 'Nurahad' seized by force the sum of 2340 thalers on board the Italian vessel the 'Selima.' This was a simple act of piracy without any possible excuse for its perpetration. Quite recently the affair of the 'Genova' took place. The 'Genova' was sequestrated by a Turkish gunboat, towed to Hodeida, and sacked. Animated by a spirit of conciliation, the Italian Government agreed to an inquiry being held into the matter, and while this inquiry was in progress another Italian vessel was seized, and the correspondence of the traders at Massaua confiscated."

These instances of Turkish aggression and hostility are followed by innumerable others which lack of space forbids me to quote. They comprise murders, rapine, violation of

Italian women, assassination of Italian missionaries, and a systematic refusal on the part of the Ottoman Government to accord to Italian enterprise in the Tripolitania those advantages and rights which were conceded without difficulty to the traders of other nations. I must limit myself to quoting from the document before me a paragraph which, I think, will prove how sincerely desirous the Italian Government was to preserve friendly relations with Turkey and how much it had hoped for from the Young Turk party.

"The warm and almost universal sympathy with which Italy had acclaimed the rise to power of the Young Turk party, the proposal to give time to the new *régime* to consolidate itself, the desire not to create embarrassment or difficulties either for the Ottoman Empire or for Europe, made the Italian Government exercise a patience and a condescension rarely equalled in the history of any people. We continued to hope for the consolidation of the new Government in its acceptance of friendly counsels, in its repentance, and in its readiness to reciprocate a friendship which on our side had been extended even to the sacrifice of our own

interests. But all was in vain. Every day the situation became more intolerable. Our patience was confronted at Constantinople either by a Government lavish of soft words and promises never carried into effect or by one which was without authority and impotent to impose obedience on its local officials; a Government powerless to observe or to respect treaties or contracts; a Government, in short, which in the eyes of Italy, had failed to act up to its international obligations. The measure was at last full. The violent hostility of the Turkish Press, the repeated acts of obstruction and bad faith of the Ottoman authorities . . . have ended by arousing and by wearying the public opinion, the Press, the Parliament, and the Government of Italy. . . . The responsibility (for this war) must rest on those who for the last three years have daily sought to provoke us and to create a condition of hostility in the various provinces of the Turkish Empire, and especially in the Tripolitania, rendering the position of Italian subjects unsafe and constituting a menace to the peaceful development of trade in the Red Sea and in our Eritrean possessions."

I have only quoted from portions of the

document from which the above extracts are taken. This Memorandum shows conclusively how earnest had been the desire of the Italian Government to preserve friendly relations with Turkey, and how much had been hoped for by Italy from the advent to power of the Young Turk party, representative members of which, as I can vouch for from my own personal knowledge, had been received in Italy in the warmest and most friendly manner, and returned to their country carrying back with them the sympathetic good wishes of the Government and the Italian people generally. This party, in accordance with the programme of its Committee of "Union and Progress," had no sooner gathered up the reins of power in Turkey than it began a system of studied insults to Italy, of persecution of Italian subjects, of direct incitement to pillage and murder, and of an insolent contempt of all friendly remonstrances on the part of the Italian Government for these outrages which on several occasions took the form of not even replying to the representations made to the Ottoman Government. And yet, so desirous was Italy of not breaking the peace of Europe; so determined was she to be generous to a nation

undergoing a series of grave internal troubles; so confident was she that the bombastic promises of the Young Turks to establish a form of civilized government in their country were genuine, that for three years she exercised a patience and a magnanimity which, I think, no other great nation would have shown under similar provocation. She knew herself to possess what she has proved herself to possess, an admirably organized army composed of brave and well-disciplined troops, and a powerful fleet; whereas the nation who had for three years continued to insult her possessed an army which, though second to none in bravery, had for long been neither organized nor disciplined, while practically it possessed no fleet at all. When outrage succeeded outrage, and friendly representations were met with studied insolence, Italian patience was finally exhausted, and the Ultimatum to Turkey was sent. It has been repeatedly asserted in the English journals hostile to Italy that no notice had been given either to Turkey, or to the Powers of Europe, that such an Ultimatum would be sent failing satisfaction for its grievances being given to the Italian Government by Turkey. This is

absolutely untrue. The Government at Constantinople had been duly warned of Italy's intention several months before the Ultimatum was finally sent; and every Cabinet in Europe had known for a couple of years that on the first favourable opportunity Italy would assert her right to her share of the North African sea-board and provinces, and would put an end to the intolerable condition of things existing in the Tripolitania—existing, that is, at her very gates. Far from being a "stab in the back," as more than one prominent English journal called the Italian Ultimatum, so anxious was the Italian Government to settle matters amicably that even at the last moment, a few days before the Ultimatum was actually despatched, its imminence was purposely allowed to "leak out" in diplomatic and financial circles in Paris in order that Turkey might have one more warning before it was too late. The period of twenty-four hours given by the Italian Government of "grace" to the Porte after the presentation of the Ultimatum was, indeed, a very necessary restriction of time. Other eyes were cast longingly not on Tripoli, perhaps, but on the splendid strategic port of Tobruk and

other commanding positions on the coast. The Italian Government knew well enough that any delay would mean a long course of Turkish "diplomacy"—or, in plainer language, false promises of redress; and that during the negotiations the Turkish Government would dispose of Tobruk and other ports to a nation not altogether satisfied with the result of its bargainings in another part of the North African coast. It was scarcely to have been expected, and especially by a country like our own which has never failed in the past to acquire advantageous sites on the face of the globe—and particularly in the Mediterranean—that Italy would consent to be left out in the cold while her neighbours were dividing up the African coast between them, and still less that she would quietly allow a great military and naval Power to seat itself in provinces where she, and she only, had commercial interests of any appreciable importance. So the Ultimatum was despatched to Constantinople, to be presented to the Turkish Foreign Minister in the usual manner by the Italian Ambassador to the Porte. Perhaps it may not be generally known what was the immediate fate of this important document on which

hung Peace or War, and, perhaps, Turkey's destiny as a European Power. The Italian Ambassador presented it to the Minister—or rather, as the Minister was not at his Ministry when the document arrived, it was taken to him to the house in which he was known to be paying a visit. It was handed to him as an urgent despatch from Italy requiring immediate attention. But the Turkish Minister was busy playing a game of bridge. He placed the document on a table, and later on his hostess said to him laughingly, "You had better look at that paper; it may be a Declaration of War from Italy!" Then the Minister did look at it, and hurried off to summon his colleagues.

This story is perfectly true. It was related to me by one in the very best position to know whether it were so, or not. It is a trivial tale enough, perhaps, but it faithfully illustrates the Turkish way of attending to urgent business.

The facts I have stated as having compelled Italy, after a generous delay of three years, finally to declare war on Turkey are surely sufficient to disprove the charges of sudden and unprovoked aggression hurled at the Italians by the Press of a nation which

had always professed friendliness and sympathy; while to describe the occupation of the Tripolitania as an act of brigandage and piracy was not only manifestly absurd, but displayed an entire ignorance of the history of those provinces. Once under Roman rule, they passed through a series of vicissitudes before again falling into Italian hands under the Sicilians. During the whole period of the Middle Ages Tripoli was nothing but a nest of savage pirates who infested the Mediterranean; and its interior was, as now, a barbarous land, the only trade of which was in human flesh. The Turks annexed these provinces only eighty years ago, and under their rule, which was purely a nominal one, for they never attempted to do more than wring taxes from the Arab population of the more habitable portions of the country and of the towns on the sea-coast, barbarism and the slave trade have still continued to flourish until the day the Italian fleet appeared to bring civilization and progress, and modern methods of cultivating the soil. Only in the city of Tripoli, and in a few minor towns on the coast, was there any attempt at trade or development, and these enterprises were and had been for many years almost ex-

clusively conducted by Italians in the face of such difficulties as have been already described.

We will now proceed to investigate into the truth of the charges brought by a number of journalists, English and otherwise, accusing the Italian troops of atrocious acts of cruelty during the suppression of the Arab revolt at Tripoli in October of last year (1911). I hope to prove to my readers that those charges were as false as the assertions that the declaration of war by Italy was a stab in the back and an act of unprovoked aggression were absurd. But here all comparisons between the two misrepresentations of Italian honour cease. The charge of aggression and unprovoked assault was, as I have said, very largely due to the complete ignorance of the public that there were any questions at issue between Italy and Turkey; and this ignorance, it must be assumed, was shared by the majority of the British Press. The iniquitous charges, however, made by a group of British journalists, and re-echoed by a considerable proportion of the British public, against the honour and humanity of brave and chivalrous soldiers while dealing with a revolt of a peculiarly base and trea-

cherous kind, were a very different matter. They were due neither to ignorance nor misapprehension, but to a deliberately formed scheme to arouse public indignation against Italy by playing upon the feelings of kindly-hearted people who would be sure to take the side of those they were told by their newspapers to be the victims of abominable cruelty. I shall show how and why these slanders were circulated, and how skilfully certain unscrupulous newspaper correspondents contrived to make the public believe they had been eye-witnesses to scenes which had taken place only in their imagination or in those of their paid informants, whereas they were many miles away from the spot where on those three October days these scenes of inhumanity and massacre were said to have occurred. I shall show how, far from having been the authors of deeds of deliberate cruelty on their adversaries, the Italian soldiers have themselves in countless cases been the victims to the most appalling and unspeakable outrages and horrors that have hitherto been recorded in the history of any war known to us—horrors to which those suffered by English men and women during the Indian Mutiny were by comparison a merciful fate.

I may mention here that not one of the group of newspaper correspondents who were most eager in their efforts to calumniate the Italian soldiers by accusing them of every kind of monstrous cruelty, and who were most sanctimonious in their expressions of shocked and outraged humanity at Italian "bloodthirstiness," has been honourable enough to make the slightest allusion to the facts I am about to describe; and that, because these unnamable atrocities were committed, at the direct instigation and approval of Turkish officers, and in some cases actually perpetrated by Turks, they have passed with no word of notice or condemnation from those who have been so ready to blacken the characters of Italians. I leave my readers to draw their own conclusions from this attitude of the calumniators of brave men.

I will, before proceeding to deal with the calumnies despatched to their respective journals by this group of correspondents, briefly recall the condition of affairs in Tripoli at the moment when the Arab revolt broke out. War was declared on the 30th September, and two or three days later the Italian fleet had already landed a body

of marines and sailors to take possession of the city of Tripoli after the comparatively slight bombardment had taken place. A few days later the transports arrived with the first contingents of the army of occupation. The Arabs from the first received the kindest and most generous treatment from the Italians. Their usages and their religion were scrupulously respected; they were handsomely, even extravagantly, paid for their services, and for all objects purchased from them; they were supplied with food when they needed it, and the Italian surgeons and doctors readily devoted themselves to the task of treating the sufferers from those forms of diseases so common to the native population of Eastern towns. It was the first time in their lives that these sufferers had been noticed or any attempts made to alleviate their miseries. Italy was not at war with the Arabs; she was at war not even with Turkey, but with the Young Turk party which after three years of insults and outrages had forced her to extremities. But as is often the way with generous and chivalrous people, the Italians made the mistake of believing that others would recognize and respond to their

generosity. The Arabs took all they could get, and pretended to be friends to Italy. Italian officers took Arab youths as their servants and treated them with the greatest kindness; while the soldiers scrupulously obeyed the instructions to injure no Arab or damage his property, and to respect the Moslem religion and the Moslem traditions as to their women. But all the time the ground was being prepared for the revolt which was planned by the Turkish officials, and which was to sweep the Italians out of Tripoli and the Christians in the city out of the world. The oases in the neighbourhood of the city were gradually turned into depots of concealed arms, and swarms of Arabs (the Turks taking very good care to be far away) were by degrees concentrated among the groves of palms and the cultivated land, hidden away, like the arms, in places where detection was impossible. On October 23rd the revolt broke out; prematurely, it is said. In an instant the Italians found themselves confronted by the gravest situation. They were shot down from behind, often by those Arabs to whom they had been most kind and who had professed themselves to be the most friendly. The slightest panic, the slightest

hesitation, the slightest lack of resolution, and disaster must have occurred not to the Italian troops alone, but to every Christian in Tripoli. The Italian dead were shockingly mutilated under the eyes of their comrades; while treachery and assassination lay in wait for the survivors at every turn. Orders were given, and rightly given, that all Arabs found with arms upon them were to be shot. This was after the great revolt of the first day had been successfully quelled. On the two subsequent days the life of no soldier was safe. The oases had to be cleared; and it was well known that every innocent Arab had abandoned them to take refuge in the city before the revolt broke out. There was, therefore, no question of dealing with "innocent" Arabs in the oases at Tripoli during those days. The hordes of treacherous Bedouins and Berbers, instigated to their treachery by the Turks who kept many miles away in the background, met the fate they deserved, and which any sensible general would have meted out under similar circumstances. General Caneva, the Italian Commander-in-Chief in Tripoli, and his officers had to think not of sparing Arabs innocent only in the imagination of a few

journalists, but of saving the military situation, and, by saving it, saving also the lives of all the Christians in the city of Tripoli.

And here comes in the skilfulness of the calumniators of the Italian soldiers to which I alluded just now—and also the dishonesty of their procedure.

The very few journalists who were in Tripoli between the 20th and the 24th of October were, like the really innocent Arabs, all safely in the city, from which, according to the military orders issued immediately the revolt broke out, neither they nor any other civilians could emerge. The oases at Tripoli happen to be some distance from the city, and the revolt and its suppression was entirely confined to these oases. It is, therefore, absolutely impossible that, even had the atrocities so brilliantly described by the group of correspondents who by chance were in the *city* of Tripoli during those days really occurred, any single one of that group could have been an eye-witness to them. The remainder of the newspaper correspondents had left Tripoli a few days previous to the revolt for Bengasi, where events were hourly expected. It is unfortunate that this was the case, as among

them were men who would not have permitted themselves to disseminate false accusations. "The innocent Arab of the Oases," as one of the most ardent promoters of the campaign of calumny against Italy, writing in the *Spectator* of February 17th, in reply to an article of mine in the previous number, naively terms the hordes of traitors and mutilators of the wounded and dead, was dislodged from his hiding-places, and that a very large number paid the penalty for believing in Turkish misrepresentations and Turkish promises is, of course, denied by no one; nor, I imagine, will it be denied that it is quite possible that even in the oases there may have been Arabs innocent of any intention of treachery, women as well as men, who shared the fate of the guilty. They can, however, have been but very few, for the reasons I have mentioned. As to the accusations made against the Italian soldiers of shooting Arab women—if any women were shot, it was under circumstances in which they richly deserved to be so. I think that not even a British sentimentalist would refrain from killing fiends capable of such unmentionable acts as those committed on the bodies of dead Italian soldiers by the Arab

women in the oases during the revolt. If any of these women were shot down while in the act of committing such unspeakable mutilations, I, for one, am glad to think that they were so. The most searching investigations, however, have failed to bring to light any cases in which Arabs were shot except when obviously the reverse of "innocent." The punishment dealt out by the Italians was severe. It had to be severe, and I am not going to spoil my case by attempting to minimize that severity. It was intended, and rightly intended, to read the treacherous Arabs such a lesson as should never require to be learned again in the Tripolitania. But to endeavour to represent a just severity as deliberate cruelty is to lie. There has been, however, no limit to the imagination of the group of journalists to which I have referred. I do not propose to recapitulate the innumerable calumnies on Italian humanity presented to the British public to swallow. I think, perhaps, that for sheer cowardliness of conception and depravity of imagination one among them stands out above its fellows. The Italian soldiers, according to our journalists of the type of the gentleman who writes in the issue

of the *Spectator* of February 17th, have a pleasant way of treating prisoners of war; and of course the commanding officers lend themselves to the diversion. Always according to the journalists, this diversion has consisted in assembling a number of Arab prisoners, and then, after announcing to them that they are set free, allowing them to walk quietly and happily away, shooting them down one by one as they do so! Now, this is a little story which has gone the round of the English Press—and it has never been contradicted by the newspapers which published it, although I know for a fact that most indignant protests were in certain cases written to the editors of those papers by persons who had a right to be heard.

It may be asked: Why should these journalists have any reason to make false charges against the Italians, and what can be their object for doing so? I should like to refer my questioner to General Caneva, or to any officer of General Caneva's staff, for the answer, so far as some of these journalists are concerned. So far as certain of the others are concerned, I should refer him to those who for commercial and financial reasons are largely interested in the welfare

of Turkey, or, rather, in the welfare of the Young Turk party, which is not quite the same thing. As I can refer my presumable questioner to neither of these sources of information, however, I will endeavour to give, at any rate, some portion of the answer myself. I say some portion advisedly, for it is not always profitable to tell the whole truth.

Quite at the commencement of the war, and nearly three weeks before the Arab revolt, great soreness existed among certain English, American, and German correspondents recently arrived in Tripoli at certain restrictions to which they found themselves exposed on the part of the authorities. They had, doubtless, come out with that sense of superiority which, I fear, creates for us English so many enemies in the world, and probably were quite prepared to patronize the Italians, and tell them how such and such a thing would be done in the English army. They found, however, that the Italian Commander-in-Chief had very definite ideas of his own as to the position of correspondents in time of war, and that he had not the slightest intention of altering his ideas to suit their convenience. Certain correspon-

dents were firmly but courteously told that they must either conform to the restrictions imposed, or their papers would be cancelled. From that moment the anti-Italian note began to sound. The occasion of the Arab revolt was seized as a favourable opportunity for paying off scores; and in conjunction with the delighted agents of the Young Turk party who had been longing to obtain an opening in the British Press for their own anti-Italian campaign, the ball of calumny was set gaily rolling round England. After all, the game was not a very difficult one to play. The journalists and the Young Turks had in their favour three very important partners—British ignorance of the causes of the war; British ignorance of the actual conditions obtaining in Tripoli; British ignorance—complete and unfathomable—of modern Italy and the Italians of to-day. With British sentimentalism added to these, so quickly responsive to the whisper of the word "atrocity," success was almost certain; and, indeed, if the success aimed at was the casting away of an old and traditional friendship, and the shameful traducing of a noble nation in order to satisfy individual spite or further individual specu-

lations, that success has been achieved! It is worth while to reflect for a moment how skilfully the sequence of events was prepared by the partners in the game of calumniating the Italians. To arouse popular indignation in England by shrieking aggression, brigandage, and stabbing in the back was the first step. Brigandage and stabbing in the back were splendid catch phrases for a public which associates Italians with both propensities. Next came the atrocity turn. This, too, presented no great difficulties. Indeed, how small was the difficulty in gulling the English public as to occurrences in Tripoli is proved by the ease which the journalists who were shut up in the city of Tripoli during the Arab revolt, and, consequently, during those days when the terrible atrocities they declared had been committed by the Italians were in process—have been able to persuade the British public that they were in the oases where alone they could have witnessed anything at all of the suppression of the revolt. Next in order came the appeal to British sentimentality—the appeal for the poor "innocent Arab of the Oases"—to repeat the words of one of the calumniators-in-chief. Faugh! The sanctimonious hypoc-

risy of the whole thing is nauseating. It would seem as though, of recent years, Englishmen have lost what was perhaps the best sense they had—the sense of fair play.

Limits of space will allow me only briefly to touch upon the incredible horrors to which Italian soldiers have been exposed in this war at the hands not only of Arabs, but also of Turks. In this case, also, I shall quote from official documents; though at the time of writing I observe that similar documents have now been transmitted to the English Press through the Italian Ambassador.

At the commencement of the chapter I quoted from the Italian Foreign Minister's Memorandum as to the causes of the war; and I imagine that it is clear from his words that Italy regards the Young Turk party as entirely responsible for the situation. Now, it is this party which has brought Turkey to the brink of ruin, and to the verge of disruption and extinction so far as her European Empire is concerned. It is this party which has for its own sordid aims prolonged the war. It is this party which, in its frantic endeavours to grasp the supreme

governing power in Turkey, has committed a series of massacres and a long roll of private assassinations and infamies of all kinds, and has had the effrontery to appeal to Europe against Italian inhumanity! Let us examine the other side of the question, and see how the Italians have fared at the hands of the Turks.

I confine my extracts from these documents to evidence forwarded to the Government by officers whose position and honour are above all question. I may add that these documents are accompanied by photographs of so appalling a nature that it would be impossible for me under any circumstances to reproduce them as additional proof of my statements.

"Colonel Binna, commanding the 93rd Regiment of Infantry, reports that in the course of a reconnaissance made beyond the trenches on November 7th and 8th five bodies of Italian soldiers were found naked and horribly mutilated." "Colonel Fara" (since promoted to be general and one of the most brilliant officers in the Italian Army), "of the 11th Regiment of Bersaglieri, has transmitted ample proofs of the discovery during a reconnaissance made on October 23rd and

24th of several bodies of Bersaglieri who had been stabbed to death. The corpses were completely stripped and had their hands tied behind them." Here follow details which are unfit for publication. "On October 23rd and 24th the bodies of the Bersaglieri found on the battlefield of Sciara Sciat were completely nude and mutilated in an unspeakable manner. The captain commanding the 5th Company of the 11th Bersaglieri and the officer commanding the 6th Company report that a wounded lieutenant and several men were surrounded by Turks and Arabs, who hacked them to pieces, and, after dragging their trunks away, proceeded to inflict the most horrible mutilations upon them. The same company also reports the discovery of corpses which bore every trace of having been submitted to the most terrible tortures before death." The accounts of these tortures I refrain from quoting. "The 7th Company of the same regiment reports similar discoveries. But more horrible than all are those reported by the 8th Company. The bodies found had their legs and arms torn from the sockets and their eyes extracted. Out of twenty-seven corpses found many were disembowelled. . . ."

I suppress the remainder of this account as being entirely unfit to publish. Other instances are reported, such as crucifixion and various tortures too appalling to mention, such as flaying. In some cases the eyes of the victims have been, after extraction, nailed to posts by their side. I am not exaggerating when I affirm that the horrors perpetrated, not only by Arabs, on the Italian wounded and dead are probably unrivalled in the annals of any war.

I will now proceed to quote from documents relating to the outrages committed on the ambulances and hospitals of the Red Cross :—

" The major commanding the 2nd Battery of the 82nd Regiment reports to have personally witnessed repeated firing on the part of the enemy on the wounded who were being conveyed to the ambulances ; and this firing was also directed upon the tents in which the medication of the wounded was in process. He also deposes to have witnessed the death of two ambulance bearers, who were shot down by Mausers from an ambush only a few paces distant. The ambulances of the Red Cross, numbers 62, 57, 19, 64, 47, and 24, all report having been

repeatedly fired upon by the Turks and Arabs while in the performance of their duties."

The documents from which I have quoted also contain innumerable instances, certified to by surgeons of the Red Cross, of the use of unlawful projectiles, such as dum-dum and explosive bullets. It is clear that these projectiles must have been supplied by the Turkish authorities. I have only been able to include in this chapter a few examples of the horrors to which Italian soldiers have been exposed during their present campaign against a foe which, not content with countenancing the most atrocious barbarisms, has also had the audacity to disseminate by means of its paid agents, and by the willing assistance of certain newspaper correspondents actuated by sentiments of personal spite against the Italian military authorities in Tripoli for having subjected their despatches to a strict censorship, charges against the humanity of a chivalrous and highly civilized race. There is, I believe, little doubt that the Italian military authorities displayed a want of tact in dealing with the newspaper correspondents at the commencement of the war; and that they subjected them to unnecessary restric-

tions in the legitimate pursuit of their profession. It is well known, however, that only a very limited number of these journalists allowed themselves to send false intelligence to their newspapers out of revenge for the treatment they had received from General Caneva; and that this limited number was composed of individuals who had from the first been regarded with justifiable suspicion by the military press censors. One of the most noisy and the least scrupulous of this little band of calumniators has recently, in the columns of the *Nation*, completely unmasked himself and his fellows. He has told us how he, and they, gained their information as to the alleged cruelties of the Italian soldiers during the suppression of the Arab revolt—namely, by questioning Arabs in the city of Tripoli through interpreters and dragomen! He has also laid great stress on the fact that the correspondent of the *Morning Post* in Tripoli, Mr. Davies, signed a protest against these acts of cruelty together with himself and other journalists at a meeting held at the British Consulate. Unfortunately for this gentleman's veracity, Mr. Davies has since recorded in the *Times* his utter amazement at having been supposed

to have done anything of the kind, and has declared the use of his name in connection with any such protest to have been absolutely unwarranted. The writer to the *Nation* also forgot to tell his readers that the British Consul in Tripoli at that time was a gentleman of the name of Alvarez, and that the "protest" signed at the British Consulate was in reality merely a very discreditable attempt on the part of himself and a few other journalists who had with reason incurred the displeasure of the Italian military authorities to persuade the public that they had official British support in their calumnies gainst the Italian troops.

CHAPTER XI

THE RE-UNIFICATION OF ITALY[1]

DURING the course of the last four months, the attention of the world in general has been, as we all know, largely, and somewhat unexpectedly, centred upon Italy.

To say that public attention has of late been centred upon Italy, however, is by no means to say that it has been centred upon the Italians. Now, English sentiment towards Italy has always been supposed to be one of traditional and, indeed, of hereditary friendship; and I fear that I am giving myself but a thankless task in seeking to show that this friendship has been based on the unstable foundations of a misconception. Nevertheless, a very long and, as my Italian friends are good enough to tell me, intimate study of modern Italian life has convinced me that, although Italy has been made the object of a sentimental and æsthetic regard on the part of my com-

[1] Republished by the courtesy of the Editor of the *National Review*.

patriots for many generations, they have made no effort to include the Italians in their affections. And in this conclusion, I may add, I find myself supported by all Italians who are in a competent position to gauge the true value of the traditional friendship existing between the two countries.

There is no nation in Europe, excepting, perhaps, the German, which occupies itself so largely and so continuously with Italian matters as our own: and yet at the same time there is no nation which so systematically and so obstinately declines to recognize the fact that Italy was made for the Italians, and not for foreigners. The yearly output of English books dealing with what are, after all, Italian possessions—things artistic, literary, architectural, topographical, social, and what not—is, as we all know, enormous; while the yearly output of English people who spend a few weeks or months in the chief cities of Italy probably exceeds that of any other nation. It might reasonably be supposed that this immense interest displayed by English admirers of Italy would have contributed to a real and intimate understanding between the two peoples; or, at any rate, to a genuine acquaintanceship

on the part of our compatriots with Italians —since these last have comparatively little opportunity of studying the English in England. I am not in the least afraid of being contradicted by any possible Italian reader of these pages when I affirm that not only does it contribute to nothing of the kind, but that, on the whole, it produces a very reverse effect. We may, I think, leave aside the impression of English friendship produced on the Italians by English visitors to Italy, since with by far the greater number of these travellers in their country Italians are not brought into anything but the most superficial contact. The Italians, therefore, have to judge of this friendship by what they read in English books, or see quoted from English newspapers and reviews. Now, these English works on Italy, it is perfectly true, are very often admirable of their kind. They overflow with knowledge—artistic, historical, political, and also topographical. They are works which, in many cases, cultivated Italians study both with pleasure and with profit, and which they frankly confess to be superior in technical value to the majority of books published in Italy dealing with similar subjects. This being so,

it may well be asked why these works should almost invariably have an irritating rather than an agreeable effect upon Italian susceptibilities. To such a question I can only give the answer that very many Italians have given me; and I must confess that I have lived long enough among them thoroughly to realize the justice of that answer.

These books, my Italian friends say, are very admirable in so far as they deal with our external attributes, our history, our art, our climate and scenery, our monuments, and our past; but, in so far as they deal with ourselves, which is for the most part very little, they are very often insults. There is a subdominant note of patronage audible whenever your English writers condescend to speak of other things than those we have mentioned—and we are a little weary of being told about our past. And if your writers speak of our present, it is as likely as not in order to rebuke us for being unworthy of our heritage, to discourse of, and to us, as though we were children; or, at the best, as though we were an unstable, excitable, and unreliable people. They ignore, or deny to us altogether, those qualities which we know ourselves to possess as a

nation, and which we are convinced will not fail us in the hour of need.

I believe, as I have said before, this answer to be both just and logical. The truth is that, to the Italian of the present day, English friendship represents merely an æsthetic sentiment for the Italy of the past, for such present external attributes as climate and scenery, and for survivals of medieval popular customs which are none the less pernicious to social progress because they happen to be picturesque. The modern Italian has little use for such a friendship. He is not sentimental, and sentimentality does not appeal to him. While fully recognizing the profound knowledge of the Italy of yesterday that a large number of English admirers of his country possess, he resents the equally profound ignorance they exhibit concerning the Italy of to-day; the disdainful lack of appreciation, and the strange misconceptions of his national character which these admirers are so apt to display not only in their writings, but in their general attitude. He very naturally dislikes to be lectured on his moral, social, and artistic shortcomings, by those of a different blood and race from his own, who are completely

unable to realize that the Latin and the Anglo-Saxon mind do not always see things from the same point of view. Above all, and more especially, I fear, of recent weeks, he weighs English friendship in the balance as an asset and finds it wanting—not in æsthetic sentimentality for Italy, but in human sympathy with and understanding of Italians.

That this lack of sympathy and understanding should have been so markedly displayed at the commencement of the struggle in which the Italians are now engaged is, as I think, especially to be deplored; and this for no reasons having any connection with sentiment. That English attention has not been in reality centred upon the Italians during the last four months, but merely upon an Italy which belongs largely to the past, is conclusively proved by the fact that scarcely any allusion is made by the English Press, or by individuals whose criticisms of the policy of Italy have certainly not been subdued in their tone, to the remarkable transformation which the Italian people is undergoing at the present moment—or, as as it would be more accurate to say, has already undergone.

I am convinced, however, that had the majority of my compatriots possessed the

slightest idea as to the deep significance of the "psychological moment" which the Italian nation is now experiencing, or any suspicion that such a moment were imminent, their criticisms would have been of a different nature. A real understanding of the character of the people which we English, with a few exceptions, have for long accustomed ourselves to regard as merely an interesting and picturesque race, would have revealed the superficial quality of those criticisms even before they were made. Such an understanding would have prevented, too, that outburst of hysterical British sentimentalism cleverly excited by unscrupulous agents, which, in utter ignorance of the real condition of affairs, selected a more than usually inopportune moment for its vapourings.

Unfortunately, to the mass of the British people, for the ignorant must ever be in the majority, Italians are synonymous with ice-cream venders, barrel-organs, monkeys, and waiters. Concerning these last, lest I should be supposed to be casting a slur on brave men, I hasten to add that hundreds of Italian waiters employed in England and other foreign countries have voluntarily offered to give up their posts in order to rejoin their

army, and that many are actually fighting for their country in Tripoli. But this detail is only one among many to which I shall have presently to allude in connection with the extraordinary national movement actually taking place in Italy.

The Italians of to-morrow are not the Italians of yesterday. They are in process of formation to-day; and the process is one of amazing interest, and fraught, perhaps, with consequences no less surprising. It is not too much to say that, in the short space of the last four months, Italy has passed through a period of re-unification. It may even be said, indeed, that she has achieved what she had not completely attained in the course of the last forty years. No keen observer of the social conditions of modern Italy previous to the outbreak of the war with Turkey could fail to detect in those conditions the almost complete absence of the most important factor in true national life—that of public opinion. I do not mean to imply that public opinion was non-existent, for this would be an exaggeration. It existed, but in a dormant state—or rather, in a state which was something more than semi-suppressed, for want of any national call to

cause it to assert itself. The organs of the Press, perhaps, were scarcely conscious of the presence of this immense inert body only needing an inspiration to cause it to spring into action and make its power felt throughout the length and breadth of the land. Political questions were too varied or of too transitory a character to stir it otherwise than superficially, and the rise and fall of political parties left it more or less indifferent. The Socialists, it is true, took advantage of its inertia to propagate their doctrines. I have a very healthy detestation of Socialism, and especially of English Socialism, but I should not be faithful to my subject were I not to express my belief that Italian Socialism, which is rather constructive than destructive, has played a not inconsiderable part in laying foundations for that public opinion in Italy which has recently burst into life with such magnificent and irresistible force. I have very little doubt that it will prove to have been a case of Frankenstein and his monster, so far as Italian Socialism is concerned—but even Frankensteins ought to be given their just due. At the first Unification of Italy—for I firmly believe that the Italians of to-morrow will look back

upon the period through which their country is now passing as their second, and even more glorious Unification—the diversity of customs and language, and of traditions, was too great to permit of the formation of any genuine and consolidated force of public opinion; while religion still occupied a place in politics from which the good sense of the Italians has deposed it. Italy, indeed, was made; but it yet remained, as Massimo d'Azeglio foresaw, to make Italians. They have been made to-day. From the Alps to the far Sicilian shores; from across the oceans; from all the countries of the two worlds, Italians have responded to the call of their country. Even the Church, once the bitter enemy to Italian unity, has blessed the new sons of Italy in their struggle with their country's foes. Italians at heart, her priests are sharing the dangers of the battlefields, risking their lives, and worse than their lives, at the hands of fanatic and treacherous adversaries in order nobly to perform their duty in ministering to the wounded and the dying. This fact is in itself of supreme importance, for it finally disposes of the erroneous impression that the modern Italian clergy are hostile to the Italian State. The action of

Pope Pius X in disallowing any attempt to regard the present war as a struggle between the Cross and the Crescent was an action at once just, from the standpoint of a neutral though spiritual Sovereign, and wise in view of the state of international politics. From every rank of life, from palaces and from the humblest peasant dwellings, the new sons of Italy have cheerfully placed their lives and their services at the disposal of their country, very many of them not having been legally called upon to do so. And yet the Italians are not a military nation: by which I merely mean to say that they are not imbued with that spirit of militarism which is the curse of their near neighbours—and of the world. The war with Abyssinia failed to arouse any spark of real enthusiasm in the country, or any real patriotic feeling. Public opinion grumbled sleepily, but it took no genuine action. Its time had not yet come. Behind the Italian army and navy there today stand the Italian people, calm, confident, assured of the justice of its cause, a nation truly united as it has never been before. There is no " mafficking " in Italy. Her sons who are not fighting for their country are not disgracing it. Those of them who have

not been called upon to rejoin the colours are worthily maintaining the national dignity at home, giving freely, and often out of scanty means, in order that Italy may carry civilization and humane government to a barbarous land in which the curse of slave-traffic still exists.

It is perhaps because there is no "maffick-ing" in Italy that the Milan correspondent of a great London daily paper attempts to prove that there is no public feeling in Italy regarding the war, unless it be a despondent and adverse one. I have his article before me as I write. It betrays in every line of it the profound ignorance of Italians which obtains even among Englishmen otherwise well informed about Italy. It is not by "maffick-ing" that a sensible and self-respecting people declares its sentiments in time of war. I have looked in vain for any thoughtful or just appreciation of the remarkable up-heaval of Italian public opinion, which has practically transformed Italy into a new nation, in the English Press. If it is alluded to at all, it is with a sneer, as an article manu-factured by the Government and the Minis-terial Press. I find no mention of the amaz-ing series of letters written by soldiers of all

grades—some of them peasants—from the seat of war to their families in Italy. These letters are constantly being published in the Italian journals, and they are documents of more than usual human interest. That they are spurious, or manufactured to order, I am prepared emphatically to deny, for it so happens that in certain cases I am in a position to be able to prove to the contrary. There is not the remotest hint in any one of these letters as to acts of cruelty, of bloodthirstiness, or of any conduct dishonourable to a soldier. How should the writers have mentioned things which had had no existence save in the imagination of foreign journalists who were many miles away from Tripoli during the suppression of the Arab revolt? But, as I have said before, it is not my intention to dilate upon this matter. I have already upheld the humanity of the Italian soldiers to the best of my ability in this volume and also elsewhere.

I notice, as I have said, very little allusion in the English Press to this second Unification of Italy which, created by an irresistible and overwhelming flood of public opinion, has astounded even Italians themselves. The fact would seem to me to indicate either

a surprising lack of perception on the part of English journalism, or a strange indifference to the consequences this transformation may bring in its train. That this movement is merely a temporary outburst of popular enthusiasm, destined to die away so soon as peace is proclaimed, no one who has followed it, and studied its far-reaching effects in the country towns and villages of Italy, will for a moment believe. To use a vulgarism—it has come to stay. Apparently it has come with suddenness; and this might lead superficial observers to suppose it to be ephemeral. This transformation, this national leap towards a second and final re-unification, has, as I believe, been steadily growing for many years. It has existed beneath the surface, gradually but surely pushing its way upward, and waiting only its opportunity to spring into life. It is impossible that a people which had achieved so much in the course of half a century should not possess a latent reserve of virile energy. It is, of course, natural that the sudden and energetic action of a race which the English public had hitherto regarded with benevolency as existing for no other purpose than to minister to the æsthetic pleasures of foreigners, should have come

as a shock of surprise. The Italians were tacitly assumed to be a happy-go-lucky people, incapable of much else than composing operas and pulling down classical buildings. That a few individual Italians should be prominent in science, or in any other useful and practical subjects, is still regarded in England as an accident, and as rather a strange accident. It has never seemed to strike English critics that not only are such individuals of far more service to the needs of a young and progressing nation than any of the great artists of the Cinquecento could be, but that their very existence denotes the facile adaptation of Italian intellect to the exigencies of the present age. As to believing that Italians could be capable of successful organization in any form, this has been, hitherto, an impossibility to the great majority of their English judges. The Italian army, because it had met with disaster fifteen years ago in Abyssinia, must be bad and inefficient; the Italian navy, a navy existing largely on paper, and of no use in warfare. The Italian monarchy must be in momentary danger of collapse.

Only the other day I read in the columns of the *Morning Post* a letter from a corre-

spondent stating that it was no secret that had the Italian Government not made war on Turkey, the monarchy would have shared the same fate as that of Portugal. Such assertions would be comic, were they not a proof of the utter ignorance of English people regarding Italian popular feeling. Then again, always according to English suppositions, Italian finance must be in a deplorable state, and all Italians, of course, miserably poor. In the district in which I reside the peasants are anything but poor. I know of some who have considerable sums to their credit in the banks. Financial conditions, of course, vary in different parts of Italy; but the truth is that there is far more money among the peasant classes than is usually supposed to be the case, and this is largely due to the Credit Banks and other economic institutions which have spread so remarkably throughout the country in quite recent years. As to the indifference of popular feeling towards the war, which certain English journals have insisted upon, a sum exceeding three million francs has been already subscribed by all classes of the community in aid of the families of the wounded and the dead, and money is still flowing in. But all

this is by the way. The awakening on the part of Italy's English friends to the fact that Italians counted for something in Italy came when the Ultimatum to Turkey was delivered. It was a rude awakening, and I can well imagine that the sentimental friends of Italy and the despisers of Italians were excessively annoyed. For want of a better explanation of Italian audacity in behaving in so unexpected a manner, Italy's action, as I have said, was termed an act of aggression, of brigandage, and of other graceful proceedings of the kind. I am merely concerned in pointing out the fact that, had the English public considered it to be worth its while to cultivate a practical acquaintance with the Italians, rather than an æsthetic and sentimental friendship for an Italy belonging to the past, much trouble might have been avoided, and much bad blood prevented. It is useless, however, to cry over spilt milk. The mischief is done, and the only thing that now remains to do is to endeavour to repair it.

Whether we English like it or not, we are confronted by a very remarkable, I will not say change, but development in the spirit of a nation with which we have always been on terms of friendliness, at least officially.

That nation has now afforded us indisputable proof that she is not the *quantité négligeable* which a great many of us who had not taken the trouble to make acquaintance with her people had imagined her to be. She has presented us with the spectacle, unique, I think, in modern times, of a people absolutely unanimous in its determination to consolidate its public opinion irrespective of party politics. We have seen the political parties of this nation—republicans, socialists, and clericals—all sink their respective differences in order to rally round the monarchy and their common country. We have to realize that the spoilt child of Europe, at whose birth we like to think we played the useful part of midwife, has suddenly developed into a strong man. We have no longer to think only of Italy; we have to think of the Italians. It is not probable—perhaps it is almost impossible—that the balance of power in Europe will long continue in its present condition; and what the ultimate outcome of the Italo-Turkish War may be, who can yet say? One result, however, it will assuredly have, for Italy will retain the African provinces she has conquered from the Turks, if not as yet from the

Arabs, and she will found a second Spezia on the Egyptian border.

Setting aside all considerations of sentiment, are we wise—have we been wise—in deliberately playing into the hands of those who desire nothing better than to see a permanent estrangement between ourselves and a great Mediterranean Power? I have endeavoured to keep sentiment as much as possible out of my argument; but, after all, sentiment plays a considerable part in international politics, even in these prosaic days. That very deplorable impressions have been created among Italians by the readiness of the English public to join in the outcry against their legitimate and unavoidable action in Tripoli, I am in a position personally to know. Austrian and German attacks upon Italian honour, proceeding from Jewish syndicates, have been regarded with comparative indifference; but that England should have joined in these attacks has been a bitter blow. This in itself proves that, notwithstanding the justifiable resentment at the traditional English misconceptions of them as a people, traditional English friendship for Italy still counts for something in their eyes. It seems to me that this last should constitute a basis upon which to

found a more complete understanding of the Italian people, and to remove from our midst those misconceptions which have until now made the mutual relations between the two countries rest on little more than a somewhat one-sided sentimentalism. But to achieve this end there must be no more patronage of the spoilt child—but full recognition of the right of the grown man to act as seems best to him in matters concerning his own house. It is surely much to be hoped, for all reasons, political as well as sentimental, that our future relations with Italy will not suffer from the severe strain to which they have been recently exposed. But if this is to be the case, it will be necessary for my compatriots to cease from perpetually proclaiming their love for Italy while at the same time misjudging and underrating the Italians. A friendship of so doubtful a quality leaves nothing but resentment in the Italian mind. And, above all, it would be well both for friendship and interests' sake that Englishmen should not ignore or misapprehend the true significance of this reunification of Italy which is taking place under their eyes ; but that they should study it with sympathy, and take its moral lessons to heart.

CHAPTER XII

THE ITALIANS OF TO-MORROW

As I stated in the opening chapter of this volume, its object has been to present to those of my readers who have no opportunity of studying the modern Italians for themselves some description, however slight, of the energetic, virile, and courageous people which in the course of two generations has been able to form out of a group of heterogeneous and misgoverned States in which, owing to foreign and priestly domination, illiteracy, poverty, and political and social discontent were the rule rather than the exception, a united nation, yearly progressing in strength and wealth, and in all those attributes which tend to the greatness of a country which takes its place among the six chief European Powers. I am fully aware of how much I have left undescribed in these pages; and of how much, perhaps, has been ill-described; but I have purposely

avoided any deep incursion into the realms of Italian sociology, and I have left untouched many points and many problems which seemed to me to lie outside the scope of this little book. That scope has been twofold. I have wished to remove, or at all events to diminish, certain misconceptions and prejudices, which I am convinced are rather traditional than actual, existing in the minds of perhaps the majority of my compatriots regarding the Italian people, and to point out that the Italians of to-day are by no means the Italians of half a century ago, or even those of a quarter of a century ago. I have wished to plead for a wiser and less superficial attitude towards Italy than that sentimental and somewhat flabby regard for Italian pretty things and Italian pretty manners or faces which may pass for friendship in England, but certainly does not pass for such with the Italians. I have, therefore, dwelt more upon the best characteristics of Italians—those characteristics which have placed Italy in the position she occupies to-day—than I have upon the defects to be found among all races, and from which the Italian race is no more free than our own. It would be absurd, and, moreover,

it would stultify the aims which have been before me in writing this book, were I to attempt to paint the Italians of to-day entirely in rose colour. In the course of the last forty years the Italians have obtained many triumphs—triumphs, as I have pointed out, over ignorance, national poverty, foreign oppression, ultramontane clericalism, and internal discord—but perhaps not the least far-reaching of these triumphs have been obtained over some of their racial characteristics which were not in harmony with the making of a great nation. There can be no doubt, I think, that these last-named triumphs have been until very recently largely, if not entirely, due to education; and it has been before education that these characteristics have been hitherto gradually giving way and transforming themselves into others more adapted to the increasing strenuousness and to the increasing responsibilities of modern Italian national life. I do not mean to say that they have altogether disappeared. They can no more disappear completely than the Latin blood can disappear out of Italian veins. Moreover, they are characteristics largely due not only to blood, but to climate—in the same way

that certain unfortunate British defects, such as drunkenness, are largely due to the same cause. Doubtless, too, conscription has done much towards eradicating a certain spirit of aversion from any form of discipline or self-control which in former times was much more characteristic of the average Italian than it is to-day. It has influenced the character of all classes, from the lowest to the highest—and it is assuredly much to be wished that some form of universal military service might be made compulsory in England, to take our hooligans off the streets and our unemployed out of the public-houses and turn them into self-respecting useful citizens—and to take, too, our idle youths of the middle and upper classes from their clubs and their music-halls for the same useful object.

My second aim in these pages has, of course, been to refute the monstrous calumnies brought against Italian soldiers by a group of unscrupulous journalists and published by English newspapers which have not been sufficiently generous, or sufficiently honest, except in a very few cases, to acknowledge that their correspondents had imposed upon their good faith. The truth,

however, will eventually come out as to the origin of these calumnies, and why they were circulated; and in the meantime the Italian people, secure in the justice of their cause, in the unstained honour and courage of their soldiers and sailors, in the knowledge that never yet did a nation in time of war display so generous and chivalrous a spirit to its adversary in refraining to strike at a vital point, or so loyal an attitude towards the interests, commercial and political, of neutral countries, can afford tranquilly to await the moment when their calumniators will be unmasked and the foul aspersions made by them on Italian honour and humanity universally acknowledged to be accusations born in some cases of revenge for restrictions placed upon journalistic enterprise, and in others of filthy lucre.

But I fear that, at any rate, we English may cease from deceiving ourselves with the comfortable idea that recognition of the falsity of these charges will be sufficient to restore the broken friendship between Italy and England. The wound dealt to Italy has been too deep for that. It is nothing to the Italians that the British Government has always preserved an attitude of the most

correct nature. They only reflect upon the fact that the English Press and the English people—their traditional friends to whom they had shown such loyalty when British honour and British humanity were attacked by the whole of Europe—unhesitatingly joined the ranks of their calumniators and sympathized with the enemies of Italy.

I observed just now that certain popular Italian characteristics predominant among the race in bygone days had hitherto been largely altered through the influence of education and conscription. Another and even more powerful influence has succeeded to these—and this has been the influence on the national character of the present war. Even the calumniators of Italy, by a strange irony, have contributed to make Italy stronger and more united than ever, and to deepen the patriotism of the Italian people. It needed not only the war with Turkey, but the discovery that soft words in times of peace from allies and from sentimental friends meant little or nothing in times of trouble to arouse in the heart of every Italian man, woman, and child a deeper sense of personal responsibility towards their country—a profounder and more passionate

love for Italy. The war has awakened in the Italians all the virile energy and courage of their race. The anti-Italian spirit displayed by foreign nations, and especially, perhaps, as demonstrated by England from whom it was least expected, has awakened Italian pride, and has instilled into the heart of every Italian a dogged determination to support his country in her unflinching resolution to pursue her policy, and to shrink from no sacrifice to cement her position as the greatest Mediterranean Power.

The Italians of to-morrow have been born. And we, the traditional friends of Italy, we have not troubled ourselves even to think of the Italians of yesterday, but have contented ourselves with bestowing at intervals pats on the back to a people existing only in our own imagination, but having nothing whatever to do with the real Italians. We have patronized in times of peace, and in the time of war we have allowed our Press to calumniate our imaginary Italian friends existing only in novels and books of "travel," composed for the most part in hotels and pensions frequented by our compatriots. We have never discovered—we have never known—the resentment mingled with amuse-

ment which for years our persistent depreciation of "the modern Italians," our refusal to see anything in them that was not "childish," or "inartistic," or "utterly unreliable"—I am quoting expressions I have read again and again in English books and heard employed by English people—our insolent interference with their management of their own concerns, and our perpetual assertions of our own superiority, mental, moral, and physical, has created. But now there is no longer amusement in the Italian mind at our attitude; there is only resentment left—and that resentment is deep and bitter, as resentment towards injustice and ingratitude on the part of a former friend always must be. Until the traducers of Italy succeeded in publishing their calumnies in the English Press, and, through the Press, succeeded in deceiving the English people, Italian resentment at British patronage and depreciation was tempered by a sense of humour; and the English were still regarded as loyal if somewhat eccentric and annoying friends, and the English Press as being like Cæsar's wife. Now, however, it is better not to allude to English friendship or loyalty. The

Italians of to-morrow, I fear, will, unless some honest and spontaneous effort be made by the English nation to repair the mischief done, never again believe in either the one or the other, however much their Government may, should England be embroiled in war, preserve an attitude of cold neutrality.

It may be thought that I am exaggerating the conditions of Italian popular feeling towards England resulting from the treacherous policy of a group of newspaper correspondents. I am not. I live among and with Italians, and I am in close contact with Italians of all classes and professions. Things which would not be written, or said in the presence of the average Englishman, are not concealed from me, for I am known to be profoundly humiliated and disgusted by the conduct of so large a section of my country's Press—and it is to the Press that the responsibility for English disloyalty and ingratitude is very rightly attributed. I will conclude this volume by again asking: Are we wise, with our great interests in the Mediterranean, and in other parts of the world in which at any moment Italian friendship might be of the greatest importance to us, in having

deliberately cast away that friendship in order to play into the hands of those who desire nothing better than to see a permanent estrangement between England and Italy? Are we wise, too, in taking as little account of the Italians of to-morrow as we have done of the Italians of to-day?

I had already concluded my self-imposed task of attempting to place the Italian nation before my compatriots in a somewhat different and, I allow myself to add, truer light from that in which past traditions have taught them to regard that nation, when a request reached me that this little volume should appear in Italian simultaneously with its publication in England. This being the case, I feel it incumbent upon me to add a few words of, I fear, very necessary apology addressed to my Italian readers for the many shortcomings they will doubtless detect in my descriptions of Italian life and character. They will remember that, although I have lived among them as one of themselves for very many years, I have probably not been able to perform the psychical feat of entirely divesting myself of my Anglo-Saxon temperament and in assuming a Latin tempera-

ment in its place. So, as I am the first to admit that only by performing this feat in a very complete manner could an Englishman invariably form a correct judgment of Italian character and actions, I feel confident that my Italian readers will forgive me if I have unwittingly given any inaccurate impressions of their countrymen or their institutions, or their national life and aspirations. I must ask their forgiveness, too, for the very many things left unsaid in this book, and for my omission to touch upon many important features of every phase of Italian life which I have attempted to describe in these pages.

I very gladly take this opportunity of thanking my numerous Italian correspondents from all parts of Italy, and, indeed, from many parts of the world, who have been so courteous as to express their appreciation of my efforts to counteract, in however small a degree, the disgraceful influences which have been at work to sow discord between their country and my own. The number of these letters must be my excuse for not having been able to reply in all cases to their writers. To very many English correspondents, too, who have written to me in the same sense, I

would express my thanks. I owe, also, a deep debt of gratitude to the Italian Press, and especially to the editors and the London correspondents of the *Giornale d'Italia*, the *Tribuna*, and the *Corriere della Sera*, for their kindness in affording me every possible support in my attempts to tell my countrymen the truth about Italy. That neither their testimony to the accuracy of my statements made in the English Press, nor their exposure of the falsity of statements written by one of the most prominent of the calumniators of the Italian army in the columns of the *Spectator*, and elsewhere, have been reproduced in or noticed by the English Press, will probably not surprise them. It is with the greatest diffidence that I offer this volume to the Italian public; but I feel confident that its very shortcomings will be pardoned for the sake of its object. I can assure my Italian readers that, notwithstanding the attitude of the Press and the intrigues of certain journalists and others, there are countless thousands of my compatriots in all parts of the British Empire who are entirely uninfluenced by the calumnies which have been served up to them with their daily papers; and who, even if they possess but a super-

ficial acquaintance with the Italian people, are unswerving in their friendship and admiration for the loyal and chivalrous Italian nation. These compatriots of mine are also loyal Englishmen—and, like myself, they earnestly desire that the future relations between Italy and England may continue to be what they have been in the past. It is, perhaps, permissible to believe that the motives underlying the campaign of calumny and misrepresentation which has so seriously threatened these relations have been too apparent, and its principal promoters too completely discredited, to permit of its ill effects being lasting.

And so, for my last words in this little volume, I will turn to one who uttered them wellnigh four centuries ago; and who, with Dante, shares the glory of being the world's greatest poet since classic times:—

". . . let
A Roman and a British ensign wave
Friendly together."

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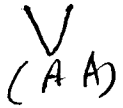

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